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Chair: Ms. Miculescu ..... (Romania)
later: Mr. Kelly (Vice-Chair) ..... (Ireland)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 52: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
(A/66/13 and Add.1, A/66/222, A/66/296, A/66/318 and A/66/520)

1. **Mr. Grandi** (Commissioner-General, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) said that major changes had been taking place in the Middle East while Palestine refugees looked on, frustrated by a stalled peace process that should have ended their long exile. The political context of the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), to which the Palestinian bid for full membership of the United Nations had added another dimension, remained challenging. He called for calm on all sides in view of the recent escalation in violence, voicing the hope that the agreement to release prisoners would improve regional stability, to which UNRWA had contributed throughout its 62-year history. Palestine refugees must continue to be protected in accordance with international law.

2. In 2010, the Israeli authorities had eased the blockade of the Gaza Strip, allowing in more goods, including construction materials for United Nations projects. By October 2011, the Israeli Government had approved UNRWA construction projects valued at approximately $188 million, out of a total estimate for reconstruction of $661 million over three years. However, import procedures had delayed a number of infrastructure projects. While the Agency appreciated Israel's security concerns, the outstanding projects were related to the security of the refugees. Rebuilding Gaza's infrastructure was crucial for Gaza's physical reconstruction, but social and economic recovery was impossible under the illegal blockade, which made its people aid dependent. Gaza faced an unsustainable situation in which its productive capacity was being stifled while its basic needs were met through United Nations intervention. For four years, it had depended on international aid or the tunnel economy.

3. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Israeli occupation continued to have a negative impact on human rights. Despite some improvements in their economic situation, refugees remained vulnerable and isolated, suffering persistent rates of unemployment, poverty and food insecurity. According to a recent report, the restrictions on trade and movement had resulted in economic losses of up to $6.9 billion in 2010. In East Jerusalem, home demolitions and revocations of Palestinian residency rights, together with settlement construction, posed threats to human security. Homes and property belonging to Bedouin communities were repeatedly demolished.

4. UNRWA had to provide special humanitarian assistance in the West Bank and Gaza, but only 39 per cent of its emergency appeal needs had been met in 2010, with a similar outlook for 2011. Noting that the unemployment rate in Gaza was one of the world's highest, he said that the wide funding gap had forced the Agency to halt new emergency employment in Gaza and to postpone food procurement for the first distribution in 2012. In September 2011, UNRWA had appealed for an additional $36 million for emergency protection activities targeting vulnerable refugees. With humanitarian needs likely to remain urgent in 2012, he called for further generous donations to be made.

5. UNRWA had welcomed the Lebanese Parliament's decision in 2010 to grant Palestinians access to formal employment in the private sector. Such measures would reduce their dependence on aid while preserving their refugee status. Nonetheless, Palestinians in Lebanon continued to live in some of the region's worst conditions for refugees; a survey had revealed that 56 per cent were unemployed and two thirds were officially poor. UNRWA had recently requested an extra $147 million to address special needs. In northern Lebanon, progress had been made in rebuilding the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp, destroyed during the conflict in 2007, but the project faced a $195 million funding shortfall, not counting the $26 million needed to assist displaced families until their homes were rebuilt.

6. Palestine refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to enjoy social and economic rights, but the adverse political and security environment was of great concern. While there was no indication that the refugees were being specifically targeted, they had suffered deaths, injuries and forced displacement. The Agency had joined calls for the violence to end and had received assurances that the Syrian Government would facilitate UNRWA operations. Meanwhile, the Agency's existing staff were responding to the increased humanitarian needs.

7. Jordan remained a stable environment for Palestine refugees, enabling UNRWA to focus on its programming and reform plans. However, a sizeable 42 per cent of the refugees registered with UNRWA lived in Jordan, many of them in poverty. The Government was improving its support for vulnerable citizens and had appealed to the international community to provide for refugees' development needs.

8. The continued lack of adequate funding for the Agency's core services was of considerable concern. Shortfalls in the previous two years had been bridged at the last minute owing to the generosity of a few donors. There was currently a shortfall of $46 million, putting operations for December 2011 at risk. Moreover, projected contributions for 2012-2013 were substantially below the level required to achieve the Agency's human development goals. In addition, UNRWA faced pressure to raise its staff's salaries, in line with public sector wages in the host countries. Yet major donors had warned that substantial additional funding could not be expected. All donors, including non-traditional ones and Arab States, should increase funding in 2011 and in future years, to place the Agency's work on a firm and predictable financial footing.

9. Having revitalized its resource mobilization strategy, the Agency wished to strengthen ties with major donors and secure new ones. He was encouraged by the response of new donors, such as Brazil, India and Turkey, while some countries, such as Iraq, had resumed funding. He urged Arab States, which had generously supported emergency appeals and projects, to contribute more to the General Fund. Noting the Secretary-General's recommendation to increase the Agency's funding under the regular budget, endorsed by the General Assembly in April 2011, he thanked the Secretary-General for his support.

10. Mindful that it must achieve more with less funding, the Agency was pursuing institutional reform, such as the innovative, results-oriented "sustaining change" plan, designed to improve service delivery. Having made good progress in the spheres of education and health, UNRWA must prioritize relief and social services, targeting the most vulnerable refugees. In line with the Agency's commitment to self-scrutiny, the results of an independent evaluation of the organizational development programme would be used to improve operations. Millions of Palestine refugees would continue to depend on the attention and generosity of the international community, until a just and durable political settlement was reached.

11. **Mr. Assaraf** (Israel) asked why, when describing the situation in Gaza, the Commissioner-General had not mentioned the rockets that were being fired at Israeli citizens.

12. **Mr. Mansour** (Observer for Palestine) thanked UNRWA and its staff for their outstanding work to help almost 5 million Palestine refugees. He also thanked the people and Governments of Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic for their assistance, which would continue to be necessary until a just solution to the question of Palestine was found in accordance with international law and General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

13. The Agency operated in abnormal circumstances, with repeated emergencies resulting from acts of aggression perpetrated by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian people, in particular in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and, specifically, in the Gaza Strip, where Israel had not allowed reconstruction to take place. He recalled that $4.5 million had been pledged at the Sharm el-Sheikh donors' meeting for such reconstruction, in which United Nations agencies would play a major role, particularly in the areas of housing and infrastructure. However, Israel maintained its illegal blockade. He thanked UNRWA, donors and the Lebanese Government and people for their efforts to rebuild the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp. The first phase had been completed and he hoped that UNRWA would receive the necessary funding to complete the process.

14. Since the current international economic and financial crisis would undoubtedly affect the Agency's ability to deliver services, he supported calls for donor countries to meet the needs of its core budget and emergency funding.

15. Palestine had applied for admission to membership in the United Nations. For two years, it had been building State institutions and a number of international bodies had declared it ready for independent nationhood as a middle-income country. With over two thirds of the General Assembly supporting the application, he hoped that the Security Council would endorse it. Furthermore, Palestine had just been admitted as a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the first time it had been granted full membership of a

major United Nations agency. Palestine would not have been able to wage the national struggle that had led it to those achievements without support from UNRWA, to which he pledged full support.

16. **Ms. Vivas Mendoza** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that, according to the Commissioner-General's report, 87 Palestinians, including nine children, had been killed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2010 and another 1,543, including 360 children, had been injured in conflict-related violence. She asked what the United Nations did to guarantee the protection of civilians in the occupied territories.

17. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) asked whether there was any prospect that UNRWA's budget shortfall might be bridged before the year's end and, if not, whether operations on the ground would be affected.

18. **Mr. Ramadan** (Lebanon), recalling the suffering of Palestine refugees, asked whether UNRWA had estimated the extra costs associated with the Israeli blockade of Gaza.

19. **Mr. Grandi** (Commissioner-General, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) said in reply that UNRWA's public condemnation of the killing of civilians in all areas of its operations, including those killed by rockets from Gaza, was on record. Without entering into details, he had expressed UNRWA's appreciation of Israel's security concerns. He repeated his call for calm on all sides.

20. Thanking the observer for Palestine for his expression of support, he said that UNRWA looked forward to Palestinian support in the future.

21. The United Nations protected civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in many ways. It was not sufficiently known that many potential problems were resolved through diplomatic channels with the Israeli authorities at the field level, for which he expressed appreciation. Advocacy was another important tool. While the main responsibility lay with agencies with exclusive mandates, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNRWA had an important role to play when Palestine refugees were specifically affected. The Agency protected civilians through its work in education and health, and coordinated the agencies responsible for human rights. Civilians must be protected not only in the Occupied Palestinian Territory but also in the broader region, including Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

22. The shortfall of $46 million in the core budget would affect the Agency's most important activities, namely schools, hospitals and social work; without funding, staff could not be paid. The Agency was conducting intensive negotiations with three or four key donors and hoped to fill the deficit. Otherwise, it would be unable to pay staff salaries for December 2011, postponing payment until January 2012. Donors frequently asked UNRWA to improve its planning but the current uncertainty hampered planning. Donors faced hardship but the number of refugees and their needs were growing exponentially.

23. It was difficult to cost the procedures related to the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip. Under an agreement with the Israeli authorities, maximum vigilance had to be exercised over the materials entering Gaza and, although it was costly, UNRWA was doing so to the apparent satisfaction of all concerned. In 2010, UNRWA had spent $1.9 million on storage and transportation, in addition to the normal cost of importing goods into Gaza. The cost in 2011 would be higher because of larger consignments, which were otherwise to be welcomed.

24. **Mr. Løvold** (Norway), speaking as Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA and introducing its report (A/66/520), said that the Agency's funding crisis had become structural and the prospects of bridging the shortfall, currently $47.6 million, remained distant. The crisis undermined access to and the quality of some UNRWA services, increased hardships for the staff and made it difficult for the Agency to comply with its mandate. Donations were therefore urgently needed to ensure that UNRWA's services were maintained. Until a just and durable solution was found to the Palestinian issue, the international community shared responsibility for ensuring that UNRWA's programmes were adequately funded. Despite the generosity of donors, the General Fund budget fell short of meeting even the minimum needs of a Palestine refugee population growing at 3 per cent a year and facing humanitarian problems. About $145 million must be quickly injected into UNRWA's working capital reserves. UNRWA had already endeavoured to improve its mobilization of resources, by establishing a new External Relations and Communications Department and widening its donor

base; the Working Group supported further financial reform.

25. In view of the difficult operational and humanitarian conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular in Gaza, the Working Group urged all potential donors, including countries in the Middle East, to fund in full the Agency's emergency appeals for 2011. The scant funding received for rebuilding the Nahr el-Bared camp was especially alarming. The Working Group supported further opening the Gaza crossings, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). The General Assembly should review the current levels and scope of funding from the regular budget while Member States should consider the Secretary-General's recommendation to increase that funding without an overall budget increase.

26. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for Palestine) thanked UNRWA and its entire staff in every field of operation for their commitment to providing services and emergency assistance to Palestine refugees. Regrettably, the Agency's staff did not receive hazard pay, despite often working in difficult and dangerous conditions, a situation that should be remedied. The continuing plight of the refugees remained of the highest priority for the Palestinian leadership, as it strove for a peaceful settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict while Israel rejected the basic principles of the peace process. It was deeply regrettable and worrying that the rights of the Palestine refugees continued to be denied, despite General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and subsequent resolutions. The lack of a just settlement of the question of Palestine, owing to Israel's intransigence and total disregard for international law, had compounded the tragic effects of the displacement and dispossession of Palestinians, greatly worsening the conflict.

27. The Palestine refugee question remained the largest and most protracted in the world. Over half of all Palestinians were refugees — living for three generations in poverty, hardship and instability, millions of them in camps — while the rest suffered Israeli oppression under the military occupation. Those living in camps in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular Gaza, were the worst off. Yet Israel denied the rights of the Palestine refugees and any responsibility for their plight. The refugees faced harsh socio-economic conditions and instability on the ground, which compounded the Agency's financial burdens, while Israel deliberately obstructed UNRWA's operations and maintained its illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip. Nevertheless, UNRWA continued its employment and microfinance programmes, offering refugees opportunities for a livelihood and development. She highlighted some of the Agency's efforts in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as in Gaza and the West Bank, for which Palestinians were grateful.

28. She deplored Israel's continued undermining of UNRWA's work and its illegal obstruction of refugee access to services in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which affected every aspect of the refugees' lives. Israel must be compelled to abide by its obligations under international law. She reiterated Palestine's deep appreciation for the principled global support for UNRWA's mission, which reflected a political and humanitarian commitment to the rights and well-being of the Palestine refugees. The international community should intensify efforts to promote the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital; that would end the plight of the Palestine refugees in accordance with United Nations resolutions, through a two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. In his statement before the General Assembly, President Mahmoud Abbas had called for an immediate end to the suffering of millions of Palestine refugees in their homeland and the diaspora. It was the responsibility of the international community to grant the Palestinians their rights and ensure that they could enjoy the stability, peace and justice they had been denied for too long.

29. *Mr. Kelly (Ireland), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

30. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, stressed UNRWA's role in serving more than 4.8 million Palestine refugees, improving their plight through the provision of services, in addition to its work in the areas of camp infrastructure, microfinance and emergency assistance. That role would remain essential until the Palestine refugees realized their inalienable rights pursuant to General Assembly resolution 194 (III). In the meantime Israel continued to deny and violate the rights of Palestine refugees and impair their well-being, safety and human development. The refugees' suffering had steadily worsened after 44 years of military occupation and systematic violations of international law. Moreover, Israel's illegal practices included the targeting of UNRWA's personnel and facilities in the

Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the obstruction of the Agency's ability to discharge its mandate. He condemned Israel's breach of the inviolability of United Nations premises; Israel must respect its obligations under the Charter and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and allow the Agency unfettered access to its beneficiaries. It must cease the military targeting of the Agency, the obstruction of its movements, the harassment of its personnel and the levying of taxes and fees on the Agency, which undermined its work and added to its financial burdens.

31. He reiterated the Movement's call for the full lifting of Israel's blockade, which had been unjustly imposed on the Gaza Strip for more than four years with a gravely detrimental impact on the socio-economic and humanitarian conditions of the refugee community and on the Agency's work. In addition to permanently opening the crossings, the occupying Power must cease its restrictions on importing construction materials, which the Agency needed for the long overdue reconstruction of schools, housing and civilian infrastructure. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israel continued its settlement and wall construction and expansion, along with its tight regime of closures, checkpoints, house demolitions, raid-and-arrest campaigns and military operations. The international community should ensure that those illegal activities, which had a devastating effect on the Palestinian population and undermined the Agency's activities, were halted immediately.

32. The Agency's ability to realize its objectives was affected by donor countries' policies and the changes taking place within the refugee population. Serious consideration should be given to ways of increasing contributions to ease the ongoing financial shortfalls, exacerbated by the situation on the ground. A just and lasting solution to the Palestine refugee question was vital for the settlement of the question of Palestine and of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole. All necessary efforts must be exerted to that end so that Palestine could soon celebrate statehood, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

33. **Mr. Vrailas** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Croatia, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia; and, in addition, the Republic of Moldova, commended the commitment of UNRWA's staff and management who, often in difficult conditions, provided essential services to Palestine refugees. The Agency's activities were all crucial to the well-being of the refugee population. The European Union and its member States remained the Agency's largest donor, having donated more than 1.2 billion euros from 2000 to 2010, while individual States had contributed significant amounts during the same period. The European Union indicated its support to the General Fund for several years at a time; under the latest joint declaration, it envisaged an annual contribution of 80 million euros in 2011-2013, subject to budgetary allocations.

34. The European Union's contribution to UNRWA in 2011 had been one of the highest for years, totalling 124 million euros by October. Most of those funds had been used to pay the salaries of teachers, doctors and social workers in the refugee camps. As well as its donation to the General Fund, the European Union had made an additional contribution of 2.4 million euros. A further 22 million euros had been mobilized from the Instrument for Stability, of which 10 million euros had been earmarked for the early recovery programme in Gaza. Another 12 million euros had been allocated for the reconstruction of the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp. UNRWA had also received 14.3 million euros in humanitarian aid from the Humanitarian Aid department of the European Commission and 5 million euros through the Food Security Thematic Programme.

35. The Union had supported the Agency's 2011 summer games in Gaza and condemned the fact that some of the facilities had been vandalized. The European Union was particularly concerned about developments in the Syrian Arab Republic affecting the Agency's operations and regretted the attack in August 2011 in the Latakia area, where the refugee camp was located. It had immediately mobilized almost 11 million euros of additional funding for two UNRWA projects in the camp.

36. The European Union had set in motion internal procedures so that it could frontload its 2012 contribution to the Agency's General Fund, to ensure continuity of service delivery to Palestine refugees. He urged new donors to commit financially to UNRWA's work and existing donors to increase their contributions. Finally, he pledged the European Union's unwavering support for the fulfilment of the Agency's tasks and the successful implementation of its reforms.

37. **Mr. Diallo** (Senegal) said that, in violation of the United Nations Charter, the Palestine refugees had been humiliated and deprived for over 60 years, suffering longer than any other group of refugees. There was little reason for optimism, despite all the support for the Palestinians' request for a just and lasting solution to the refugee question in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 194 (III) and 302 (IV). Moreover, everything had been done to persuade Israel to stop impeding UNRWA's operations in the occupied territories. UNRWA had spared no effort to implement its programmes and provide services to some 5 million Palestine refugees. However, the international community must mobilize the necessary resources to enable the Agency to attend to the refugees' human development. In 1974, the United Nations had been mandated to finance only a small part of UNRWA's needs, something that should be reconsidered. Unfortunately the initiatives taken in 2010 had failed to put one of the Organization's most important programmes on a firm financial footing. His delegation believed that, with regard to Palestinian exile, justice delayed was justice denied.

38. **Mr. Saripudin** (Indonesia) said that his Government was deeply disturbed by Israel's continued violation of the rights of Palestine refugees. Israel should lift the blockade of Gaza, which had been imposed on the refugees as a collective punishment and created massive humanitarian difficulties; the crossings should be opened to allow badly needed reconstruction to take place. Israel continued to expand its settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, not only obstructing peace but also violating international law and complicating life for Palestine refugees. He acknowledged UNRWA's vital role in contributing to regional stability by improving the refugees' welfare and living conditions, an investment in the peace process.

39. Indonesia strongly supported Palestine's recent application for United Nations membership, a positive step towards peace. He called for the international community to pay urgent attention to the Agency's persistent underfunding, which might result in cuts in or the abandonment of the programme, with grave consequences for the region. It was time to find ways to ensure that UNRWA could continue with its critical work and prepare the way for peace.

40. **Mr. Pham** Vinh Quang (Viet Nam) said that amid global economic turmoil and despite financial constraints, the Agency continued to shoulder great responsibility. His delegation was deeply concerned about the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory resulting from Israel's military occupation and illegal actions. It endorsed the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries' declaration on Palestinian political prisoners; urgent attention must be paid to their grave situation. His delegation regretted the hampering of UNRWA's work by restrictions on its movements and damage to its infrastructure and facilities. The Agency's privileges and immunities must be fully respected and actions that impeded its work must be stopped.

41. Having endured tremendous hardships and losses resulting from war, Viet Nam treasured the cause of peace. He called on all parties to resolve the conflict through political negotiations and refrain from any act that might prejudge their outcome or erode confidence. Israel must stop construction of the separation wall and settlements and lift all restrictive measures and ensure humanitarian access. All parties must abide by international humanitarian and human rights law. Viet Nam had long recognized the State of Palestine and would support its legitimate request for full United Nations membership. It also supported renewed efforts by the Quartet, the League of Arab States, countries in the region and the United Nations to promote Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on all core issues.

42. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the refugee question encompassed international, political, legal and moral responsibilities, not merely a humanitarian responsibility to provide services. An entire people had been the victim of colonialism and international collusion resulting in their expulsion and the occupation of their land. For decades they had suffered persecution, discrimination, ethnic cleansing and denial of their national identity. Numbering over 5 million, they were the world's largest group of refugees, many living under an Israeli occupation that violated the most fundamental human values and principles.

43. More than six decades had elapsed since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948, yet the international community was still incapable of implementing it. The same was true of all the other United Nations resolutions on Israel's occupation of Arab lands and the crimes which it committed there, bringing in foreign settlers from around the world to seize Palestinian homes, land and property with the support of States that purportedly

rejected settlements and touted themselves as defenders of human rights.

44. In fact, those States granted Israel exceptional immunity from international law, a disgrace to the United Nations that must not be passed over in silence if international justice and the credibility of the Organization were to be preserved. It was no longer acceptable for the United Nations to evade its responsibility under the Charter to compel Israel to end the occupation of Arab lands and implement internationally binding resolutions, including those relating to the return of the Palestinians to their home.

45. Once again, the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA (A/66/13 and Add.1) described the tragedy visited on the Palestinian people by Israel and the inhumane blockade of Gaza, as Israel continued to thwart reconstruction projects in the Gaza Strip, where it had sown destruction during its 2008 aggression, committing war crimes and grave violations of international humanitarian law that qualified as crimes against humanity. It continued to commit those crimes without being held to account, prevented the rebuilding of UNRWA schools and facilities, and engaged in provocation against UNRWA activities and projects in Gaza.

46. In the Palestinian Territories, the population was subjected to a harsh system of racist restrictions on movement, residence and the exercise of fundamental freedoms, in addition to the apartheid wall, closures and curfews. The Israeli occupation authorities were also intensifying their restriction of the freedom of movement of UNRWA staff and goods, thus adversely affecting the humanitarian situation of the refugees and the ability of UNRWA to carry out its mission.

47. The Arab countries hosts to Palestine refugees were also effective donors, taking into account the services and assistance they provided. Syria was host to half a million Palestine refugees, and treated them as it did its own citizens. In 2010, Syria's assistance to Palestine refugees living in the country had totalled $225 million. Syria also provided all possible support to UNRWA.

48. His Government spared no effort to protect the lives and rights of Palestine refugees within its territory, including in response to recent acts of murder and sabotage by armed terrorist groups. His delegation rejected any distortion of the facts concerning the incident in the Raml al-Janubi camp in Latakia, which had involved normal search operations in pursuit of armed criminals who had taken refuge there. There had been no recourse to armed violence on the part of the Government, nor had any Palestine refugees been injured, as confirmed by Palestinian sources, contrary to inflammatory reports in some media.

49. In order to be able to continue and improve its services, UNRWA needed increased funding, a broader contributor base and fulfilment of contribution pledges. UNRWA should be provided with financial resources under the regular budget of the United Nations in view of the Agency's precarious financial situation and the decline in funding between 2009 and 2010. He called on States which, without the slightest hesitation, earmarked billions of dollars for going to war, interfering in the affairs of other States and providing military and financial assistance to Israel, to revise those policies in line with human rights and civilized humanitarian values. Their allocating even a minuscule part of those funds, rather than shirking their responsibilities, could contribute enormously to assisting the Palestine refugees and improving the inhuman conditions in which they lived.

50. **Mr. Al-Falahi** (United Arab Emirates) expressed his country's concern at the dire situation that Palestine refugees faced as a result of Israeli aggression and repressive policies. He drew attention to the catastrophic socio-economic and human consequences of Israel's violations of the refugees' rights and freedoms. Additional international pressure must be brought to bear on Israel to lift the blockade of Gaza, desist from hampering UNRWA projects, provide protection to Palestine refugees and guarantee the safety of UNRWA personnel and facilities in accordance with international law. The illegal blockade not only restricted the movement of the Palestine refugees and blocked their access to international humanitarian assistance, but also prevented the reconstruction of schools and hospitals. The problem of the Palestine refugees was linked to the larger question of Palestine, whose solution lay in a comprehensive peace settlement that granted the refugees their full rights under international law.

51. The marked decline in resources and financial support for UNRWA, exacerbated by the global financial crisis and the growing number of refugees, affected not just the Agency's ability to deliver its development programmes and projects but also its emergency assistance and aid programmes. His

Government, which had consistently given the refugees political, financial and moral support, had paid its 2011 contribution to the Agency's budget in full. He urged donors to double their contributions in order to address the budget shortfall and meet the increasingly urgent humanitarian needs of the Palestine refugees. His Government had contributed to efforts to rebuild the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp and welcomed UNRWA's education reform strategy for 2011 to 2015, launched in October 2011.

52. **Ms. Smith** (Norway) said that UNRWA's financial shortfall persisted, with the 2011 deficit projected at 20 per cent of the core budget. With the refugee population growing at 2.4 per cent a year, structural changes in the Agency's financing were required. Mindful that the long-term solution was to enhance the donor base, Norway had been engaged in UNRWA's efforts to attract new donors. In addition, it would continue to cooperate with the Agency with regard to the effective use of resources. For its part, the General Assembly must ensure that UNRWA was properly funded under the regular budget.

53. Further improvements were needed in UNRWA's operations and the second critical phase of reform must be pursued. Economic management had been substantially improved in the past year, but more also had to be done to improve the quality of the Agency's services so that UNRWA could better serve the Palestine refugees. She called for a reassessment of the Agency's cooperation with other stakeholders and partners, through closer coordination with other agencies and bodies, the Palestinian Authority and the host countries. Donors must ensure that their contributions were spent in the most cost-efficient way possible.

54. Since the human resource base in the refugee camps was underused, new ideas were needed to enable economic production and the provision of services in order to increase residents' incomes and improve their living conditions. She suggested launching a camp-based pilot programme involving key stakeholders, including the private sector. Since better-integrated approaches would benefit service delivery in the camps, the international community should help UNRWA to put such ideas into practice. UNRWA had played an important role in the significant progress towards making Palestine ready for statehood, while providing services for Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. It should do more to develop the social fabric in the camps and the occupied territories, laying the basic foundation for a Palestinian State.

55. **Mr. Alyas** (Saudi Arabia) urged the Agency to continue offering its humanitarian services to all Palestine refugees, alleviating their suffering until they could return to their lands and they received compensation in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). In view of UNRWA's expanding programmes and the growing numbers of refugees, donors should double their contributions to alleviate the Agency's financial troubles. His Government had increased its contribution to $86.7 million in 2011, making it the third biggest donor; it had also allocated $200 million for Al Aqsa Fund projects.

56. His delegation strongly condemned the Gaza blockade and called for it to be lifted forthwith. It demanded the immediate cessation of all arbitrary measures and of restrictions imposed on international aid agencies by Israel, and the removal of the illegal separation wall in the West Bank. The international community should compel Israel to compensate UNRWA for the damage it had caused to the Agency's property. Israeli colonization was one of the last vestiges of colonialism and apartheid. Saudi Arabia had participated in all international peace conferences on Palestine and had proposed the peace initiative adopted by the Arab League in 2002. Financial support was not the only means of solving the refugees' problems. They required political support from the international community in order to resolve the Palestinian issue through recognition of their State by the United Nations, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and with its capital in East Jerusalem. If the refugees were allowed to return under a just and comprehensive peace based on United Nations resolutions, security and stability would be restored throughout the region.

57. **Mr. Tarawneh** (Jordan) said that the crux of the conflict in the Middle East was the Palestinian issue, at the heart of which lay the problem of the Palestine refugees. His Government had always sought a solution to that problem in accordance with international law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, in particular General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which provided for the return of the Palestine refugees and compensation for their losses, as well as with the Arab peace initiative and the 1994 Jordanian-Israeli

peace treaty, which called for a solution based on international law.

58. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East had been created in 1949 to deal specifically with the affairs of the Palestine refugees, thus placing the United Nations and the international community face to face with their responsibilities towards them. He reaffirmed the importance of continuing to entrust that role to UNRWA until the question was resolved.

59. UNRWA figures indicated that Jordan was host to 2 million Palestine refugees, or 42 per cent of the Palestine refugee community, a situation that strained its budget, already in deficit. In 2011 the country would spend $900 million on refugee services. Yet Jordan was allotted only 21 per cent of the UNRWA general budget. He reaffirmed the need for a fair share of the Agency's allocations, particularly in view of the country's economic problems. The provision by Jordan of services to the refugees in no way signified approval of any reduction in the services or financing of UNRWA or relinquishment of the right of return.

60. The enormous disparity between the Agency's responsibilities and its budget was alarming, threatening both its role and the refugee community, which was in dire need of support. Any reduction in services would adversely affect peace and security in the region; all donor States should honour their financial commitments without delay and increase their contributions, while further efforts should be made to expand the donor base.

61. It was also important to expand the work of UNRWA to include all 13 camps in Jordan and to extend that work to other areas of the country, inasmuch as 82 per cent of the Palestine refugees in Jordan lived outside the camps. The Government flatly rejected the pressure exerted on UNRWA to curtail its services, which must, rather, be developed and improved. It intended, moreover, to grant UNRWA land for building schools and health centres, and welcomed the Agency's intention to open a hospital in the Irbid camp. It also valued the role of the Norwegian Government in financing, together with the Fafo Foundation, a survey of the conditions of Palestine refugees in the Kingdom's camps.

62. **Mr. Zhang** Changwei (China) agreed that UNRWA was working in very difficult circumstances, in the face of a challenging humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The blockade of Gaza had made the lives of refugees more difficult. His Government urged Israel to lift the blockade and allow humanitarian aid and commodities to reach the refugees. Calling on the international community to help the refugees, he said that donors should honour their commitments promptly. China had always supported UNRWA's work and was concerned about its funding shortfall. It had made a contribution to the Agency every year since 1981 and would continue to do so. China had always been a supporter of the just cause of an independent Palestinian State and therefore backed Palestine's application to become a full Member of the United Nations. A just and lasting solution to the refugee question was vital for the settlement of the question of Palestine and of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

63. **Archbishop Chullikatt** (Observer for the Holy See) said that as the global economic situation worsened so did UNRWA's finances. Facing a growing number of refugees and new demands for services, the Agency and the non-governmental organizations assisting the refugees were fast approaching breaking point. A just settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — long overdue — was the key to many problems facing the Middle East; the two-State solution offered the best chance for ending the refugees' suffering. The failure of the parties to resolve their differences caused violence that affected innocent people on both sides; moreover, it had worldwide implications, having been exploited by many for geopolitical gains. In the meantime, a fourth generation of Palestinians had been born into refugee status. The Holy See considered Palestine's quest for admission as a State Member of the United Nations from the perspective of attempts to find a definitive solution. Courageous decisions must be made for the sake of peace. The Palestinians were entitled to an independent State while Israelis had a right to security, both within internationally recognized borders.

64. Recalling that Jerusalem was the spiritual patrimony of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, he called on the parties to negotiate in good faith and ensure religious freedom in the city and grant access to the Holy Places for people of all faiths and nationalities. The international community must facilitate meaningful negotiations in order to reach a reasonable compromise so as to secure a just and lasting peace in the Holy Land.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

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Chair: Ms. Miculescu ..... (Romania)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 49: Assistance in mine action (*continued*) (A/66/292)

1. **Mr. Nwosa** (Nigeria) said that, notwithstanding the role of the United Nations in mine action, and a visit to Nigeria in March 2011 by the Implementation Support Unit of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, all mine clearance in the country had been undertaken by the Government alone. No other States had provided help, and no financial assistance had been forthcoming from the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action.

2. Nevertheless, the Government had initiated a national programme on mine action, under which, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 64/84, all activities complied with International Mine Action Standards, and were gender-sensitive. Nigeria had established a mine action centre and a national stakeholders committee, organized a national sensitization workshop, and launched a national plan on victim assistance. The main elements of the plan were removal of landmines, mine-risk education, identification and empowerment of victims, capacity-building, and provision of business loans on concessionary terms. Under the national programme annual reports would be submitted to the United Nations. In 2010 the Government had budgeted $5 million for those activities, which it intended to expand, and would welcome United Nations assistance.

Agenda item 52: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (*continued*) (A/66/13 and Add.1, A/66/222, A/66/296, A/66/318 and A/66/520)

3. **Mr. Assaraf** (Israel) said that he was surprised that the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), in his briefing, had not mentioned the continuing rocket fire from Gaza.

4. He reiterated his Government's commitment to the Agency's humanitarian mission, and to the understandings expressed in the 1967 Comay-Michelmore exchange of letters between Israel and UNRWA. The Commissioner-General and other UNRWA officials had on numerous occasions described the close relationship and cooperation that they enjoyed with the Israeli authorities. That was the day-to-day reality on the ground, in clear contrast to the text of the anti-Israeli, politicized draft resolution on the subject that the Committee would soon vote on.

5. The only goods that Israel prevented from entering Gaza were arms and material with dual-use applications. Israel's blockade of Gaza was solely intended to prevent the smuggling of arms to Hamas and the other terrorist organizations that operated with impunity in the area. Despite the constant rain of ever more sophisticated rockets, mortars and missiles from Gaza on Israeli civilians and its duty to stop the flow of weapons, the Israeli Government had continued to take steps to support the economy in the area. Additional changes had been made in February 2011 to implement the understandings reached between Prime Minister Netanyahu and Quartet representative Tony Blair. Israel had also taken measures to substantially improve the West Bank economy, including through the removal of hundreds of roadblocks and checkpoints. Other measures had been taken to improve access and movement. At present, no civilian goods were prevented from entering Gaza through Israeli crossings. The result had been a significant increase in Gaza's gross domestic product.

6. Israel had approved 163 projects overseen by the international community in Gaza; requests for additional projects had been made, and more approvals were on the way. Nevertheless, 40 per cent of the approved projects had not yet been implemented. Since June 2010, Israel had approved 62 UNRWA education projects, including the construction of 42 new UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip. UNRWA claimed that there was an urgent need for more than 100 new schools in Gaza. Yet the Agency had not filed requests to have anywhere near that number of schools built and was far from completing the projects that had already been approved; in fact, UNRWA had not even begun construction on more than half of all the schools that had been approved.

7. Notwithstanding the successful cooperation between Israel and UNRWA, there had been unfortunate instances when UNRWA officials had acted contrary to the humanitarian mission of the Agency by making controversial political statements. Those ventures into political terrain undermined the Agency's neutrality and harmed its mission. UNRWA should focus its energies and financial resources on its humanitarian role and leave the realm of politics to others.

8. Many States had used the current debate to make inflammatory statements against Israel that had done little to support UNRWA or Palestinian refugees. No Arab country had figured among the Agency's major donors over the past 10 years. Israel hoped that its Arab neighbours would offer tangible support to the Palestinian people through meaningful contributions to organizations such as UNRWA, which actually received most of its support from Western countries.

9. The draft resolutions due to come before the Committee were politicized and biased. They ignored basic facts, such as the destructive role played by Hamas in the region. Hamas, which had been recognized as a terrorist organization by the European Union, the United States of America, and by others, had remained in control of the Gaza Strip since taking over the area in 2007. The organization had openly called for Israel's destruction and maintained Gaza as an epicentre of terrorism. Hamas also continued to violently disturb the efforts of the international community in Gaza, particularly the work of UNRWA. The draft resolutions that would come before the Committee made no mention of the violent takeover of the Gaza Strip, and ignored the rockets that continued to rain down on Israel civilians. And there was no discussion of the violence that Hamas continued to unleash against UNRWA.

10. Israel was committed to resolving the refugee problem as part of a comprehensive solution to the conflict, which could only be settled through direct negotiation and realistic compromises. Prime Minister Netanyahu had called again and again for direct negotiations to begin immediately without preconditions. He hoped the Palestinians would sit down at the negotiating table instead of simply offering the same empty rhetoric in international forums.

11. **Mr. Shaanika** (Namibia) said that UNRWA should receive additional funding from the United Nations regular budget. Assistance to refugees who had lived in camps for decades was vital. While strengthening UNRWA was critical to its operational success, the issue of occupation must not be forgotten, given that it was the major cause of the suffering of Palestinians. Namibia supported the admission of Palestine to the United Nations as a full Member. The people of Palestine had the right to live in peace and security in a viable State — that was the path to a durable solution.

12. **Mr. Shakenov** (Kazakhstan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), said that OIC was concerned that the expected deficit of UNRWA had become structural. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation supported the request for additional funds for UNRWA from the regular budget of the United Nations, as recommended in the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the management capacity of UNRWA (A/65/705). The Organization of Islamic Cooperation was also concerned over the lack of progress with reconstruction in the Gaza Strip. The approval process implemented by Israeli authorities and difficulties at checkpoints severely restricted the flow of goods in and out of Gaza and should be abolished. His organization fully supported the Agency's efforts to provide both reconstructed and new shelters and schools. It strongly condemned the forced displacement of refugees and other Palestinians in the West Bank.

13. **Mr. Rey** (Switzerland) said that UNRWA should continue to fulfil its mandate in the best possible way, in cooperation with national and local authorities. That applied in particular to the Syrian Arab Republic, where the economic situation had deteriorated considerably over the past few months. With regard to Lebanon, he urged the authorities to effectively implement the legislation adopted in 2010 to facilitate access by refugees to employment opportunities.

14. Ongoing and systematic violations of international humanitarian law in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem, and in the Gaza Strip, continued to negatively impact the basic human rights of Palestine refugees, and placed an additional financial burden on the donor community. Switzerland supported the recommendation of the Secretary-General for the provision of an additional $5 million from the regular budget of the United Nations. His Government would support UNRWA in its efforts to expand its donor base and to implement new fund-raising strategies, and would maintain its financial commitment to UNRWA at the current level.

15. In a context of increasing funding difficulties, it was essential to optimize service delivery in order to reach vulnerable target groups with sustained quality services. Alternative approaches, such as the provision of cash to support sustainable poverty alleviation, could help to optimize efficiency and increase the impact of aid, as well as support local markets. Further awareness-raising and advocacy vis-à-vis all

stakeholders would be required for the implementation of such strategies. Switzerland welcomed the reported progress relating to organizational development and the ongoing reform strategy and was looking forward to reports of further improvements. His Government was ready to continue its support for the Agency's reform processes through different instruments such as earmarked contributions and strategic secondments.

16. Switzerland had played an active role in different bodies such as the Advisory Commission of UNRWA and, during 2011, as Chair of the Advisory Commission's Sub-Committee. Switzerland had done its best to facilitate frank discussion of sensitive issues, with the focus for the current year on budget and reform. Switzerland would continue to offer its services as a facilitator for constructive dialogue between UNRWA and the governmental institutions responsible for dealing with Palestine refugees.

17. **Ms. Gunnarsdóttir** (Iceland) said that Israel should immediately end all settlement activities, including in East Jerusalem, and cease building the separation wall on occupied Palestinian land. She welcomed the measures taken by Israel to improve the importation of goods and construction materials into Gaza. Nevertheless, she reiterated Iceland's position that the blockade of Gaza was contrary to international humanitarian law and should be lifted immediately.

18. She commended Lebanon for the legislative amendments granting Palestine refugees a degree of access to the workforce and to Lebanese social security. She urged the Lebanese Government to fully implement the amendments and to extend them to additional professions.

19. The reconstruction of Nahr El-Bared Camp in Lebanon had enabled 317 families to return to their homes; however, there were still thousands of refugees living in temporary shelters who depended on UNRWA for their well-being. Access restrictions continued to suffocate Nahr El-Bared's once thriving economy, increasing the refugees' reliance on UNRWA. She urged the Lebanese authorities to continue to ease those restrictions. Iceland fully supported the recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the management capacity of UNRWA, as well as its reform efforts.

20. **Mr. Al-Kuwari** (Qatar) praised the work done by UNRWA, especially in the area of health, social and education services. Despite all the Agency's efforts, the Israeli authorities had continued to tighten the economic blockade against unarmed Palestinians, especially in the Gaza Strip. The inhumane blockade and the recent Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip had led to a deterioration in the humanitarian and living conditions of Palestine refugees in Gaza. The humanitarian situation of Palestine refugees in the rest of the occupied territories, including in East Jerusalem, had also worsened as a result of continued restrictions and other Israeli practices that violated international law, particularly international humanitarian law. His delegation called on the international community to deal firmly with the Israeli Government in order to compel it to refrain from military attacks on unarmed civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

21. A just solution to the Palestinian question must take into account the legitimate demands of the Palestinian people for a viable Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and for the right of return of Palestine refugees to their homes, with adequate compensation, as called for in General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Only then would the Palestine issue be resolved. Qatar welcomed the admission of the State of Palestine as a full member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

22. **Ms. Vivas Mendoza** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her delegation welcomed the accession of the State of Palestine as a full member of UNESCO. The actions of the Israeli army in 1948 had constituted an ethnic cleansing of Palestine. The human tragedy of the Nakba had been met with complicit silence on the part of an international community that was ashamed of the Holocaust. The attempt to erase the memory of Palestine was evident in the establishment of illegal settlements, the confiscation of land, the evictions and demolitions in East Jerusalem and the obstacles to road travel.

23. The wall at the Gaza border and the obstacles to the efforts of UNRWA to rebuild homes, schools and hospitals were part of that same policy. The "memoricide" had continued with the threat by a member State of UNESCO to cut its budget because it had dared to recognize the existence of Palestine. Palestine existed, however, and its history would be strengthened by the new refugee registration system that completed the first phase of the archiving project set up by the Agency. The work of UNRWA had a far-reaching positive impact on the lives of Palestine

refugees. The international community had a responsibility to work for a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, including through the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in order to guarantee the return of Palestinians to their lands and end the drama that had lasted for over 60 years.

24. **Mr. Abulhasan** (Kuwait), expressing grave concern about the deteriorating humanitarian and environmental situation in the Gaza Strip and the unjust measures imposed on the Palestinian people by the Israeli occupation authorities, said that the lifting of the blockade should remain a priority for the United Nations.

25. After joining the Advisory Commission of UNRWA, Kuwait had increased its voluntary annual contribution to the Agency from $1.5 million to $2 million. He called on the international community to continue to support the Agency and urged donor countries to fulfil their commitments and help mobilize resources.

26. Palestine refugees had a right to return to their country in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Commending the Agency for its efforts, he reaffirmed Kuwait's commitment to, and solidarity with, the Palestinian people in its efforts to fulfil its internationally recognized rights.

27. **Ms. Pessôa** (Brazil) said that Brazil had shown its support for the Palestinian people by increasing its financial contribution to UNRWA in recent years in recognition of its complex mandate. Brazil welcomed the exchange of prisoners carried out in October 2011 and hoped that that positive development could be translated into further cooperation, in particular concerning the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. An immediate and sustained opening of crossings was imperative. The resumption of regular exports from Gaza was urgently needed.

28. Brazil was also concerned at the extremely vulnerable situation of the Palestine refugees in Lebanon. Having contributed to the reconstruction of Nahr El-Bared in 2010, Brazil regretted that progress with reconstruction and the return of residents had been limited by the lack of funding for the reconstruction project. Brazil commended the Lebanese Government for addressing the issue of access to the labour market by the refugee population; however, much more support was needed. Brazil was concerned over the alarming financial situation of UNRWA. Her delegation welcomed the Agency's financial reforms and increased transparency. She urged Member States, in line with the conclusions contained in the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the management capacity of UNRWA, to support the recommendation to increase funding to UNRWA under the United Nations regular budget.

29. **Mr. Apakan** (Turkey) said that it had become clear that the serious funding challenges faced by UNRWA had become structural. Having chaired the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA, Turkey was aware of the problems facing the Agency. He urged all Member States to take into consideration the recommendations of the Working Group and to significantly increase voluntary assistance and contributions to the Agency. Turkey had doubled its contribution, and its bilateral assistance programme and joint projects would also continue.

30. All obstacles, both direct and indirect, to the work of UNRWA in the Occupied Palestinian Territory must be lifted, and the Agency must be given full access by the Israeli Government. The situation in Gaza continued to be an embarrassment to the international community. He called for the immediate lifting of the blockade and full implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). While UNRWA had performed admirably, providing much-needed services on the ground, without a just and viable resolution of the core issue of the refugees in the context of a comprehensive peace agreement, the plight of millions of exiled Palestinians could not effectively be addressed. Turkey strongly supported the realization of a just and lasting comprehensive peace in the region, based on a two-State solution. The State of Palestine should be recognized as a full-fledged Member of the United Nations.

31. **Mr. Chabi** (Morocco) pointed out that the high unemployment rate among Palestine refugees and the population growth had raised significant additional challenges for UNRWA as it attempted to fulfil its vital mandate. The restrictions on movement imposed on the refugees had continued to hinder economic development. The Agency played a critical role in the provision of education and health services, human development and empowerment of the refugee populations. Morocco welcomed the reform agenda being implemented by the Agency. The sustaining change plan deserved the full support of Member

States, since it catered to the needs of the most vulnerable categories among the refugees.

32. The Palestinian cause remained a national cause for the people of Morocco. As Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, His Majesty King Mohammed VI had expressed early support for full membership of the State of Palestine in the United Nations, including recognition of its sovereignty on the basis of the June 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. His delegation welcomed the admission of the State of Palestine to UNESCO and hoped that Palestine would soon become a full Member of the United Nations as well. The Government of Morocco, as well as civil society organizations, had donated substantial amounts for projects benefiting the Palestine refugees.

33. **Mr. Mohammed Ishak** (Malaysia) commended UNRWA for its dedication in providing essential services to Palestine refugees. The root cause of the sufferings of the Palestine refugees was the unlawful occupation of Palestinian territory by Israel. Despite the so-called easing announced by the Government of Israel in June 2010, the illegal blockade continued to choke the livelihood of the Palestinians in Gaza and seriously impaired the Agency's reconstruction projects. Immediate steps should be taken in accordance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and the relevant provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War in order to ensure the free flow of essential and commercial supplies, particularly construction materials, into Gaza. His delegation was concerned that UNRWA continued to be underfinanced. He called on States that were in a position to do so to consider contributing or increasing their contributions to the Agency's General Fund so as to enable it to continue its work, which was essential until such time as a just and lasting solution to the plight of the Palestine refugees was achieved, including their right to return and to fair compensation, on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

34. **Ms. King** (Australia) said that her Government welcomed the continued emphasis by UNRWA on fiscal responsibility and organizational reform. Australia had contributed substantial amounts to UNRWA over the years and was planning a new five-year partnership with the Agency which would result in the disbursement of predictable levels of financial assistance. That assistance would be disbursed "unearmarked" into the UNRWA General Fund. At the meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for the Palestinian Territories in September 2011, Australia had announced plans to significantly increase contributions to Palestinian humanitarian and development activities. Australia strongly supported a negotiated two-State solution that would allow an independent Palestinian State to live side by side in security with Israel. Australia welcomed the Middle East Quartet's 23 September statement describing a timetable for negotiations and calling on parties to agree an agenda and to refrain from provocative actions. She urged both sides to return to negotiations urgently on final status issues and to refrain from actions that undermined trust. Australia would continue to support the establishment of a future Palestinian State.

35. **Mr. Gupta** (India) said that the immediate challenge facing UNRWA was the funding crisis; accordingly, India supported the efforts of UNRWA to enhance its donor base. While there had been some improvement in security-related restrictions on the West Bank and in the movement of humanitarian supplies and other products into Gaza, the remaining restrictions caused severe hardships for the Palestinian population and hindered the work of UNRWA. India supported the call for removal of restrictions on the movement of Agency staff and goods; in addition, further simplification of the approval process for transportation of humanitarian materials by UNRWA would greatly help the population in need. India also hoped that the amended labour legislation in Lebanon would be implemented expeditiously to ensure better employment opportunities for Palestine refugees.

36. His Government had continued its development support to the Palestinian Authority. It had increased its annual contribution to UNRWA and had made a special contribution in response to a flash appeal in 2010. Over the last two years, India had also made substantial contributions as untied budgetary support to the Palestinian Authority. It had also undertaken joint projects with its partners in the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Trust Fund in Palestine. India had been steadfast in its support for the Palestinian people's struggle for a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders side by side and at peace with Israel, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace

Initiative and the Quartet road map. India looked forward to welcoming Palestine as an equal Member of the United Nations. It was critical for the international community to work closely with the parties with a view to encouraging them to resume direct negotiations. In that context, India had noted the Quartet statement of 23 September and hoped that the timeline indicated in the statement would be realized, leading to an enduring resolution of all final status issues, including the refugee issue.

37. **Ms. Daher-Violides** (Lebanon) said that the primary goal of the Committee must remain the right of the refugees to return. UNRWA was the principal source of basic services for the Palestine refugees and thus, pending their return, the commitment of the international community to them through UNRWA was critical. Lebanon urged the donor community as a whole to mobilize the needed resources, particularly for the UNRWA General Fund. She also urged the General Assembly to consider additional financing for UNRWA from assessed contributions. The financial shortfalls of UNRWA were exacerbated by illegal Israeli port and related transit charges on its shipments entering the Gaza Strip and by the illegal blockade. Easing the blockade and not lifting it completely was unacceptable and remained a clear violation of the responsibilities of the occupying Power.

38. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Israeli occupation and its associated regime of closures, house demolitions, land confiscation, settlement activities and the racist separation wall continued to have an adverse effect on the Palestine refugees, limiting their access to UNRWA services and resources. UNRWA remained the partner of the Lebanese Government in providing for the just needs of the Palestine refugees in 12 camps and 16 refugee population centres across Lebanon. The Lebanese Government, despite its limited resources, spared no effort to improve the living conditions of the Palestine refugees. In August 2010, the Lebanese Parliament had passed amendments to employment legislation granting additional employment rights to Palestine refugees. Lebanon highly appreciated the work of UNRWA in the reconstruction of the Nahr El-Bared camp and welcomed the completion of its first phase. The plight of the Palestine refugees was a political issue and not just a humanitarian concern. Israel was fully responsible for all the suffering of the Palestine refugees and should respect their right of return, as an inevitable step on the road to a just peace. For its part, the international community should compel Israel to comply with its obligations under international law, including humanitarian law and human rights law.

39. **Mr. Govender** (South Africa) said that the relative calm among the world's largest refugee community would not be possible without the critical interventions by and in support of UNRWA. His delegation was therefore dismayed by the response of the Permanent Representative of Israel to the Secretary-General as recorded in the report of the Secretary-General on persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities (A/66/222, para. 3). In particular, his delegation objected to the Israeli argument that the Agency's mandate should include the active promotion in the Palestinian context of the broadly applied United Nations goals of resettlement and local integration of refugees. In the absence of critical services provided by UNRWA directly to its beneficiaries, an already volatile region would have to deal with a desperate population deprived of all their basic human rights and human development.

40. UNRWA had made a substantive contribution in the areas of health care, education and vocational training, food aid and other forms of hardship assistance. Nevertheless, extreme poverty within the refugee camps was a matter of concern, especially at a time when the shortfall in the Agency's budget had doubled. South Africa had over the years continued its financial support for the work of the Agency and would additionally continue its political support for the Palestinian people, as well as its economic support, through the IBSA Trust Fund. At the bilateral level, South Africa would continue to support capacity-building programmes for the Palestinians. Member States should also increase funding for UNRWA from the United Nations regular budget. Ultimately, the alleviation of the ongoing suffering and plight of the Palestinian people lay in a long-term political solution that would enable the creation of a Palestinian State coexisting peacefully alongside the State of Israel on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. He welcomed the decision taken by the majority of member States at the General Conference of UNESCO to admit the State of Palestine as a member. As a member of the Security Council, South Africa would support the Palestinian application for membership of the United Nations.

41. **Ms. Moreno Guerra** (Cuba) said that Cuba demanded the immediate cessation of the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories, the Israeli settlement activities and the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of military force against the defenceless civilian population. The cruel and illegal blockade of Gaza must be lifted immediately and without conditions. Cuba strongly supported Palestine's application for full membership of the United Nations and welcomed the recent decision by the General Conference of UNESCO to admit Palestine as a full member of that organization. The situation in the Gaza Strip was alarming. The road blocks and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, including food and medicine, were causing serious harm to the Palestinian people. Cuba condemned that hostile policy, which had persisted despite the repeated calls of the international community and the many resolutions adopted by different United Nations bodies. UNRWA must receive the necessary support and guarantees to enable it to carry out its work and achieve its objectives. Cuba was concerned about the financial situation of UNRWA. Nevertheless, the illegal occupation by Israel of Palestinian territories was still the main obstacle to a just and lasting peace throughout the region. The international community must not rest until the Palestinian people were able to exercise their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination and sovereignty as an independent State on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

42. **Mr. Al Zayani** (Bahrain) said that his delegation commended the efforts made by UNRWA, the Advisory Commission and host States. The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had continued to deteriorate. UNRWA was hampered by Israeli restrictions and by a recurring budget deficit. In his letter to the Commissioner-General of UNRWA dated 22 June 2011 (A/66/13), the Advisory Commission had expressed deep concern that the separation barrier, closures, curfews and other restrictions on movement imposed by the Israeli authorities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had led to further hardship for the affected population.

43. The Agency had made considerable progress in remedying its structural deficit by developing innovative programmes and activities drawing on expert help funded by donors. The organizational development reform had marked a successful qualitative improvement in planning, service delivery, human resources management and communications technology. The Secretary-General's report on strengthening the management capacity of UNRWA (A/65/705) acknowledged that the Agency's management reform process had reached an important landmark at the Geneva Conference on meeting the humanitarian needs of the Palestine refugees in the Near East hosted by the Government of Switzerland in June 2004.

44. The medium-term strategy for 2010-2015 was therefore of particular importance. The Advisory Commission had emphasized its support for sustaining the momentum of change within UNRWA with the aim of improving its effectiveness in delivering services to refugees in cooperation with host countries. Nevertheless, the situation remained critical. The Secretary-General's report noted that, despite having once again downsized its General Fund budget, UNRWA anticipated a funding shortfall of $63 million.

45. His delegation commended all donors, particularly major donors, and hoped that UNRWA would secure larger donations in order to avoid any measures that could negatively affect its services. The international community's moral support for UNRWA gave cause for hope.

46. The refugee issue was, at its core, a political one; the Agency's continued existence was a result of failure to implement General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which enshrined the right of Palestine refugees to return to their homes. UNRWA would remain an indispensable organization pending a solution to the Palestinian issue in accordance with resolutions of international legitimacy, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative.

47. **Mr. Nwosa** (Nigeria) said that the deplorable living conditions of Palestine refugees continued to be a scar on the collective conscience of humanity. His delegation objected to the ongoing denial and violation of the rights of Palestine refugees by the Israeli authorities and called for respect for humanitarian and human rights law and the relevant United Nations conventions. The budgetary constraints under which UNRWA had to work were a source of concern. While Nigeria recognized that the economic slowdown had made it necessary to exercise more financial discipline, austerity measures should not be exaggerated. The

impediments to the work of UNRWA should be viewed within the larger context of finding a lasting solution to the Middle East problem. Israel and Palestine should live side by side, in security and safety, within well-defined borders determined through a negotiated settlement. Israel should trade land for peace and be assured of its inalienable right to live with its Arab neighbours.

48. **Mr. Sugio** (Japan) said that Japan had begun to provide assistance to the Palestinians through UNRWA in 1953, even before its accession to the United Nations. The significant aid provided by his country to UNRWA was part of its efforts for the realization of peace in the Middle East. Japan had attached particular importance to assisting Palestine refugees in the area of human resources development through education and vocational training. In order to achieve a viable Palestinian State, it was essential for Palestinians to create solid economic and industrial foundations and develop administrative institutions and human resources. To that end, Japan would continue to support various projects in the Jordan Valley under the Corridor for Peace and Prosperity initiative. Japan hoped through that initiative to establish a good model for regional cooperation. Since 2007, Japan had also extended a series of non-project grants-in-aid to the Palestinian Authority to promote the Authority's economic and social development efforts. Japan had been pursuing coordinated efforts with East Asian countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia in order to contribute to Palestinian state-building efforts. His Government welcomed the efforts that had been made by UNRWA to implement the ongoing organizational development process in order to improve the Agency's administration and operations. The recent visit to Japan by the Commissioner-General had helped to raise awareness among the Japanese people of the situation of Palestinian refugees and the activities of UNRWA.

49. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that Israel must ensure unrestricted mobility and non-interference in the activities of UNRWA so that it could perform its mandated responsibilities. In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Palestinians continued to suffer major restrictions on movement, residence and other fundamental freedoms, while Israeli settlements expanded. UNRWA was supporting some of the most vulnerable and marginalized refugee communities. He welcome Palestine's admission to membership of UNESCO. His delegation called upon the international community to come forward with generous contributions in response to the Commissioner-General's appeal for funding for the rehabilitation and emergency assistance programmes for the refugees in the Nahr El-Bared camp in Lebanon.

50. **Mr. Belkheir** (Libya) said that UNRWA faced a number of challenges, the most important of which were the settlement policies, arbitrary restrictions and military actions perpetrated by the Israeli occupation. Those activities had created a tragic situation for Palestinians, whose humanitarian, economic and social conditions had continued to deteriorate. The Israeli occupation authorities had committed clear violations of international humanitarian law, the Charter of the United Nations and international conventions. They must, without delay, lift the unjust, illegal and unethical blockade of the Gaza Strip, remove checkpoints between Palestinian populations and between East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and dismantle the separation wall. Occupation, land seizures, settlement policies, house demolitions, expulsions, intimidation and settler violence all prevented the resolution of the refugee issue.

51. The issue of Palestine refugees was part of the broader problem created by a coercive colonial occupation. In accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly, any just and comprehensive settlement should uphold the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right of return, the right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

52. UNRWA had a vital role to play in providing essential services to Palestine refugees. The international community, non-governmental organizations and international financial institutions should make further efforts to strengthen political support and garner financial resources for the Agency's work.

53. **Mr. Motanyane** (Lesotho) said that the inordinately lengthy period that the Palestine refugees had endured in refugee camps had had devastating social and psychological effects. The Palestinians suffered from armed conflict and all kinds of human rights abuses. The settlement policy deprived them of their land and made them vulnerable to displacement. UNRWA was finding it increasingly difficult to provide food and shelter for the Palestine refugees owing to the

blockade. The problem was compounded by the imposition of taxes and other levies on the Agency, which hampered the delivery of core services. The lifting of the blockade must be a priority. The funding gap in the UNRWA budget was of great concern to Lesotho, as it prevented the Agency from meeting the needs of the Palestine refugees. He encouraged current donors to increase their contributions to the Agency, and urged new donors to come forth. UNRWA must continue its work until justice was done and the Palestinians lived in their own land in peace and security.

54. **Mr. Grandi** (Commissioner-General, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) thanked the delegation of Palestine for its support for the work of UNRWA. He had noted the comments made by the representative of Israel and wished to express his appreciation for the Israeli Government's support and for the measures taken to ease the blockade of Gaza.

55. In clarification, he noted that since the easing of the blockade, 18 projects authorized by Israel had been completed, including five schools; 16 were being implemented, including seven schools; a further 33 schools had been approved, and UNRWA was currently completing procedures prior to construction. Funding for projects was not forthcoming immediately; once approval had been received, the Agency had to find funding and complete tendering and other procedures before it could proceed. Thirty-nine projects were pending approval by the Government of Israel; of those, 32 were schools, one was a vocational training centre, and the rest were for refugee housing. The housing project was already largely funded. Only 26 requests for approval for schools had not yet been submitted; that was because UNRWA was waiting for the last batch to be approved before submitting a new request. The Agency had appealed to the authorities on the ground for an acceleration of procedures to further ease the blockade. That appeal had been well received by the military authorities concerned, which were working on simplified procedures. He shared the view of many speakers that the blockade was counterproductive for everyone in Gaza and the region, and that it was illegal under international law and therefore should be lifted.

56. He welcomed the support for a broadening of the rights of refugees in Lebanon. It was extremely important for the Government to approve the implementation decree for the legislative amendments adopted by Parliament in 2010, so that UNRWA could start work on implementing broader rights for refugees, especially the right to work.

57. He welcomed the support for regular and predictable access in the Syrian Arab Republic in spite of the current difficult circumstances. He noted with appreciation the statement by the Syrian representative that his Government would continue to support UNRWA in the Syrian Arab Republic. He noted the universal support regarding the need for the funding of UNRWA to be regular and predictable. He commended those donors that had contributed resources in spite of difficulties, including new donors, emerging economies and Arab donors. He called for increased contributions in respect of core funding, and requested the support of all delegations in the Fifth Committee during its budget deliberations. The fact that all of the Agency's initiatives had increasing costs was regrettable, but unfortunately that was the cost of the political failure to achieve a just and lasting solution to the conflict, including the question of refugees. The only possibility for moving on and giving almost 5 million refugees a chance for a real future was to find a political solution.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

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Chair: Ms. Miculescu ..... (Romania)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Statement by the President of the General Assembly

1. **Mr. Al-Nasser** (Qatar), President of the General Assembly, said that, among the items on its agenda, the Fourth Committee's deliberations on peacekeeping operations in all their aspects related to the core mission of the United Nations. The promotion of peace, security and prosperity worldwide was connected with the sustainable development and prosperity that he had announced at the start of the sixty-sixth session as one of four priority areas. Also, the Committee's deliberations on the peaceful uses of outer space had given impetus to international cooperation in that field.

2. The situation in the Middle East was one of the most sensitive issues the Committee considered, especially in view of recent events. In a historic development, the President of the Palestinian Authority had on 23 September submitted Palestine's application for membership in the United Nations; at the same time, the Quartet was accelerating its efforts to relaunch the negotiations which it was hoped would hasten the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine; and on 18 October, the international community had hailed an exchange of prisoners, proof of the vital importance of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes. Such developments should reinvigorate the Committee's work, and facilitate its adoption of the relevant resolutions so important to the overall process. The General Assembly must continue working towards the negotiation of a just and comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East, resulting in two viable, sovereign and independent States, living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders based on pre-1967 lines.

3. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), whose work the Committee also considered, had for over 60 years played a pivotal role in preserving regional stability by alleviating the suffering of the growing Palestine refugee population living under extreme political and economic conditions. Expressing his gratitude to those donors who had maintained their valuable voluntary contributions to the Agency even in difficult times, he urged Member States to do their part.

Agenda item 53: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/66/356, A/66/362, A/66/364, A/66/370, A/66/373 and A/66/400)

4. **Mr. Kohona** (Sri Lanka), speaking as Chair of the Special Committee and introducing its report (A/66/370) describing living conditions and the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan between September 2010 and August 2011, said that it was based on information gathered during the Special Committee's one-week mission to the region in July 2011, including its first ever visit to the occupied Gaza Strip, along with meetings in Jordan. The Government of Israel had again failed to accommodate the Committee's request to visit the occupied West Bank and the Golan. Support had been made available for Palestinian, Israeli and Syrian witnesses, including non-governmental organizations, to appear before the Committee.

5. The Special Committee's overarching observation following its visit to Gaza was that, despite the limited relaxation of Israel's blockade, it continued to amount to collective punishment of the civilian population, with a particular impact on children and on physical and mental health. Also of serious concern were the Israeli restrictions on freedom of movement, sometimes even enforced by deadly gunfire, and on the importing of materials needed to reconstruct the housing and infrastructure still so visibly devastated by its shelling. Witnesses had also noted that Israel's "buffer zone" had effectively expropriated land within Gaza formerly used for agriculture and fishing, hobbling those industries and creating serious poverty.

6. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israel continued to confiscate Palestinian land, demolish houses and expand settlements, while settlers attacked Palestinians and their property, allegedly with the complicity of the Israeli security forces. Israel persisted with the construction of the separation wall, in defiance of international law. While the Special Committee welcomed the recent exchange of prisoners, it had heard testimony raising serious concerns about the treatment of Palestinians in Israeli prisons and their access to due process.

7. The Committee had been unable to travel to the Syrian Arab Republic in 2011, but had been in contact with victims in the occupied Syrian Golan by

teleconference. Their testimony indicated that Israel's policies and practices were unchanged. The specific concerns included discriminatory access to water, travel restrictions, the construction of a wall cordoning off the Territory, excessive use of force and poor conditions of detention.

8. The Special Committee's key recommendations were, with respect to Gaza, that Israel should lift the blockade, take immediate action to improve the health of children and clarify restrictions on internal freedom of movement. With respect to the West Bank, Israel should desist from confiscating further land or demolishing homes, and from expanding its settlements in occupied Palestinian land. At the same time, it should dismantle existing settlements, take effective measures to end violence by settlers against Palestinians and their property and ensure the humane treatment of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. With regard to the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel should ensure adequate access to water and facilitate visits for Syrians in the occupied Golan with family members elsewhere in Syrian territory.

9. **Mr. Šimonović** (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights), introducing the five reports by the Secretary-General under agenda item 53, said that his report on the work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/66/373) outlined the activities undertaken by the Special Committee from September 2010 to August 2011 and by the Department of Public Information in support of the Special Committee's work.

10. The report on the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories (A/66/362) indicated that, despite the Secretary-General's requests, no reply had been received from Israel or any of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention regarding action they had taken to implement General Assembly resolution 65/103.

11. The report on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan (A/66/364), based on information provided by United Nations bodies operating in the territory and by Israeli and Palestinian non-governmental organizations, recommended, inter alia, that Israel should comply with its international legal obligations and its Road Map commitments in respect of settlements and that all serious allegations concerning settlement-related criminal acts should be properly investigated and prosecuted.

12. The report on Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem (A/66/356), focused mainly on violations of the right to life, demolitions, the shelling of Israeli civilian areas, and detention of Palestinians. Among other things, it called for observance of the international humanitarian principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in the conduct of hostilities in order to avoid civilian casualties, and for accountability.

13. The report on the occupied Syrian Golan (A/66/400) summarized the Syrian Arab Republic's response to the Secretary-General's request for information from Member States on action taken to implement General Assembly resolution 65/106.

14. **Mr. Assaraf** (Israel) said that 19 rockets had been fired from Gaza into Israel during the Special Committee's visit. As its members must have noticed the rockets, he asked the Chair of the Special Committee why had they not been mentioned in its report.

15. **Mr. Kohona** (Sri Lanka) said that none of the Committee members who had visited Gaza could recall a single rocket being fired during their four-day visit, even though they had spent much time outdoors, having been advised that there was no risk. He agreed that it was difficult not to notice rockets being fired.

16. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) said that, with the support of the international community, millions had taken to the streets in Middle Eastern countries to demand freedom, social and economic opportunities, democracy and human rights. Whereas in some instances the international community had acted to ensure the safety and rights of the civilian populations, it had yet to take decisive action to end the ruthless Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and heed the appeals of Palestinian civilians for much-needed protection.

17. Israel's obligations as an occupying Power, which it had disregarded for four decades, were set forth in

the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which it was a party. The International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child also applied to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Yet Israel had continued to make a mockery of international law by systematically violating the human rights of the Palestinian people, committing countless acts that constituted war crimes and State terrorism. It has caused unnecessary loss of life — almost 100 had been killed by Israeli occupying forces in the last year alone.

18. More than 750 Palestinians in the West Bank had been displaced following the demolition of their homes. Amid serious diplomatic efforts by all parties — and despite Israel's misleading assertions of its commitment to the two-State solution — its Government had recently announced the construction of nearly 6,000 more illegal settlement units in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and it had vowed to continue building new settlements in East Jerusalem, in specific retaliation for the acceptance of Palestine as a Member State of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Furthermore, there had been a sharp increase in Government-sanctioned acts of violence and harassment perpetrated by settlers against Palestinians throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It must be underscored that all settlement activity was illegal under international customary and criminal law, and that it posed the single greatest threat to the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State and the two-State solution and, by extension, to a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The international community, including the Security Council, must bring Israel into compliance with its obligations.

19. At the same time, construction of Israel's expansionist wall continued. In and around East Jerusalem, moreover, Israel continued to expel indigenous Palestinians in order to create a Jewish majority in the city, with a view to determining its fate illegally and unilaterally. Israel's actions and words made it clear that it was not committed to peace. The Palestinian leadership, while it welcomed the recent agreement on the release of prisoners, continued, in addition, to call for the release of the remaining Palestinian political prisoners, totaling more than 5,000, including hundreds of children who where being detained under harsh conditions in Israeli prisons. Many were subjected to physical and mental abuse as well, held in solitary confinement and even tortured. The mistreatment of children, in particular, warranted immediate attention by the international community.

20. Turning to the Gaza Strip, she said that Israeli military attacks had continued against its more than 1.5 million besieged inhabitants, who were being collectively punished; at least 11 Palestinians had been killed in the preceding week alone in illegal extrajudicial executions. The poverty and deprivation was compounded by Israel's unlawful blockade, which was in its fifth year. The international community must demand that Israel fully lift the blockade and allow free movement of persons and goods, reconstruction and social rehabilitation.

21. The rule of law must apply to all members of the international community without exception, and the same moral and legal yardstick must be used to measure Israel's occupation and violations as applied to all other issues on the global agenda.

22. The Palestinian people and their leaders were committed to peace and the two-State solution, but the opportunity for peace was slipping away. All efforts must be exerted to bring about a final peace settlement in order to allow the Palestinian people to realize their right to self-determination and freedom in an independent State of Palestine, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, at the same time ensuring a just resolution of the plight of the Palestine refugees.

23. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that Israel's respect for international law was the prerequisite for ending human rights abuses in the occupied territories, and ending the occupation itself and the Arab-Israeli conflict. While noting recent international and regional efforts, the Movement regretted the failure to restart direct peace negotiations on the Palestinian track, mainly owing to Israel's lack of commitment to abide by clear agreed parameters. Those included Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008), the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map. Israel's illegal acts of aggression as occupying Power were destabilizing the situation, and undermined the viability of the two-State solution on the basis of the 4 June 1967 borders.

24. As reflected in the Special Committee's report, the human rights situation in all the occupied territories was dire under the long-standing Israeli occupation. The Movement was deeply disturbed by the Committee's findings of systematic lawlessness, in particular with regard to the situation of children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, where the overall situation continued to deteriorate, with a wide range of basic rights being violated. The Movement called, in particular, for the immediate cessation of Israeli measures aimed at illegally displacing or transferring Palestinian civilians from strategic areas in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially East Jerusalem. It was disturbing that Israel, the occupying Power, continued to pursue such practices — the settlement campaign, the separation wall, forced evictions, home demolitions, the revocation of residency rights — although they were prohibited under international law and had been rejected by the international community. Israeli settlements were undoubtedly the main obstacle to direct negotiations and the two-State solution. Steps must be taken in accordance with international law to end Israel's illegal measures, which affected especially the most vulnerable, such as women, children and refugees.

25. The critical human rights situation in Gaza, a top priority for the Movement, inflicted deep suffering on Palestinian civilians. Israel was imposing collective punishment through its ongoing blockade while the lasting consequences of its military aggression in 2008 and 2009 continued to violate human rights and international humanitarian law. Israel must fully lift the illegal blockade and open all crossing points. Welcoming the prisoner exchange agreed to under Egyptian auspices, the Movement nevertheless condemned the continued detention of more than 5,000 Palestinians in Israeli jails, regularly subjected to ill-treatment and abuse. They must be released immediately and, failing that, there must be a proper international inspection of their conditions.

26. In the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel was also clearly violating international law, and must withdraw completely in accordance with Security Council resolution 497 (1981) to 4 June 1967 borders.

27. It needed to be emphasized that serious peace negotiations could not be conducted while Israel violated the human rights of the civilian populations under occupation and exacerbated the conflict. The Non-Aligned Movement demanded that it cease all violations and act in good faith to promote an environment conducive to peace, by refraining from provocation, acting to alter the status especially of East Jerusalem, or prejudging the outcome of final-status negotiations. The international community must prevent the peace process from collapsing after so many years of efforts and itself demand that Israel respect its legal obligations as an occupying Power and cease all its violations of international law. Reaffirming the Non-Aligned Movement's unwavering commitment to a just and comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, with the question of Palestine at its core, he called for the immediate restoration of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination and sovereignty in an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

28. **Mr. Vrailas** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Croatia, Iceland, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Serbia; and, in addition, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the fundamental changes recently witnessed in the Arab world had made the need for progress in the Middle East peace process all the more urgent. Moreover, they had shown that the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians for statehood and of Israelis for security must be heeded. The European Union reiterated its appeal to the parties to resume negotiations in accordance with the Quartet Statement of 23 September 2011 and underlined the Quartet's crucial role in facilitating the resumption of direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

29. Echoing the Quartet's call on both sides to refrain from provocation, the European Union deplored the recent Israeli decisions to expand East Jerusalem settlements and accelerate construction in East Jerusalem and the West Bank and in West Bank outposts. All settlement activity — an illegal obstacle to peace and the two-State solution — should cease immediately and new construction plans should be abandoned.

30. The European Union welcomed measures taken to ease restrictions on the freedom of movement in the West Bank and entry of goods into Gaza. Further steps should be taken, in order to push back radical elements and promote Palestinian economic development. Israel and all other parties must respect the human rights of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Welcoming

the presentation of the Palestinian 2011-2013 National Development Plan on governance, economy, social development and infrastructure, he called for continued international support for the Palestinian state-building process. In view of troubling reports that the Israeli Government planned to suspend the transfer of revenues to the Palestinian Authority, he recalled that revenue collection by Israel on its behalf should be efficient, transparent and predictable.

31. With regard to Gaza, the European Union called for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), respect for international humanitarian law and the immediate and unconditional opening of crossings to allow the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons. A solution must be found that allowed for the reconstruction and economic recovery of Gaza while addressing Israel's legitimate security concerns; the European Union had offered its assistance to achieve that objective. Concerned at the renewed exchange of fire in Gaza and the south of Israel, following the firing of rockets by Islamic Jihad into Israel, the European Union condemned the indiscriminate targeting of civilians and called on all sides to respect the ceasefire.

32. The European Union would continue to work with its partners within the Quartet and with others for a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

33. **Mr. Diallo** (Senegal) said that, out of respect for international moral principles and the Charter of the United Nations, his delegation expressed its solidarity with the suffering people of the occupied territories, who for more than four decades had been denied a normal life. Compassion was no longer enough for the Palestinian people and other Arabs living under the inglorious Israeli occupation, nor could they understand the international community's continued inability to prevent violations of their essential and inalienable rights.

34. In view of the continued occupation of the Arab territories, notwithstanding United Nations resolutions calling for its termination, the Security Council must reaffirm the need for strict compliance with all relevant resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention, and it must demand that Israel end its witting or unwitting violation of the human rights of populations under its occupation.

35. In its report, the Special Committee had collected sufficient evidence, despite Israel's failure to cooperate, of systematic violation of the rights to life, liberty and security and freedom of movement. Denial of those rights and of the Palestinian people's right to create an independent State with internationally recognized borders compromised the quest for a just and lasting peace.

36. **Mr. Haniff** (Malaysia), speaking as a member of the Special Committee, commended the Governments of Jordan and Egypt for their cooperation, in particular the latter for facilitating the Special Committee's first visit to Gaza, but regretted that Israel's uncooperative attitude had precluded a visit to the West Bank.

37. The Special Committee's report illustrated Israel's flagrant violations of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs in the occupied territories. During the Committee's distressing mission to Gaza, he had personally observed that the Israeli blockade was a form of illegal collective punishment. Houses and other buildings lay in ruins for lack of construction materials, while inadequate power supply was affecting the whole society, but the elderly and sick in particular. The sea blockade had impoverished the fishermen of Gaza, while the encroachment of the "buffer zone" into Palestinian land had severely restricted farmers' activities. The enforcement of the blockade at gun point had led to many civilian casualties. Children in Gaza were crammed into containers that served as temporary schools. About 70 per cent of the 1.6 million Palestinians living in Gaza were totally dependent on the United Nations for humanitarian assistance. The Special Committee's recommendations on Gaza must be fully implemented. In particular, Israel must lift the blockade of Gaza, stop all settlement-related activities on Palestinian land, end its illegal and repressive policies and practices against Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, ensure the right of the Palestinian children to education and adhere to international standards with regard to the treatment of Palestinian prisoners.

38. The human rights situation in the occupied Syrian Golan remained a matter of international concern, as a result of deplorable Israeli policies and practices such as discriminatory access to scarce resources, the impeding of cross-border family visits, annexation of Syrian lands, and mine-laying. Israel must, moreover, conduct a full and transparent investigation into the many deaths and injuries of unarmed Syrian civilians in May and June 2011. The dehumanization of Palestinians and other Arabs in the occupied territories

prevented the achievement of a just and lasting peace. The international community must stop allowing Israel to violate human rights and humanitarian law with impunity in the occupied Syrian Golan as well as the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

39. **Mr. Assaraf** (Israel) said that, with their glaring omissions, findings presented out of context and blatant distortions, the reports before the Committee undermined its credibility. The Special Committee's one-sided mandate ruled out any accurate or impartial reflection of the situation on the ground. Israel was harshly criticized at length, but Hamas's brutal repression of Palestinians in Gaza was overlooked, the thousands of Israelis killed, injured or bereaved by acts of Palestinian terror were ignored and incitement in Palestinian schools, mosques and media went unreported. The Special Committee had filled many pages of its report with fierce criticism of Israel, but the firing of 19 rockets at Israeli civilians during its mission to Gaza in July had been conveniently excluded — and just denied once more — as had the more than 9,000 rockets launched into southern Israel over the previous decade.

40. Like all countries, Israel had the right to protect its citizens. In just the past week, more than 40 rockets, long-range missiles and mortars had been launched into Israel, resulting in one death and many injuries. The acts of terror committed against Israelis in 2011 should shock all decent people. When Hamas was not attacking Israeli civilians, it was oppressing and violating the rights of its own people, deliberately endangering civilians and international organizations and inciting hatred against Jews and Israelis. In the West Bank, as well, terror attacks continued and Jews were murdered. No government should be expected to sit idly by under such circumstances and Israel would continue to exercise its right of self-defence, as appropriate.

41. The reports under consideration ignored the positive developments in the West Bank and Gaza, which had won international acknowledgement. According to Palestinian statistics, the gross domestic product (GDP) of Gaza had grown by 28 per cent in the first half of 2011, per capita income had risen by over 20 per cent, and unemployment had fallen dramatically. In the West Bank, Israel had removed hundreds of roadblocks and checkpoints, helping to achieve 8 per cent growth in 2010 and 4 per cent in the first half of 2011.

42. The Special Committee continued to suggest that settlements were the main cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, even though the conflict predated the first West Bank settlement by almost half a century. The issue of settlements would be addressed in negotiations, but the main obstacle to peace was not settlements but the Arab world's refusal to acknowledge the Jewish people's ancient connection with the land of Israel, and the Palestinian insistence on the so-called right of return. The Palestinian leadership was calling for an independent State, while insisting that its people return to the Jewish State. That proposition would mean the destruction of the State of Israel, and was thus a denial of its right to exist.

43. Israel was the only country in the region with a free and open judiciary, a bedrock commitment to advancing human rights, a vibrant democracy, a free press and a very active civil society; whereas in some of the States that were members of the Special Committee free expression was repressed, minorities were persecuted, elections were a sham, and fair trials had never taken place. For 43 years, the United Nations had invested resources in biased reports against the only free society in the Middle East, even as the people of Iran and the Arab world suffered repression, economic stagnation and tyranny. Because the unprofessional Special Committee distorted the truth blatantly, doing nothing to advance peace or address the real challenges facing the Palestinian people, Israel would continue to refuse to cooperate with it.

44. **Ms. Vivas Mendoza** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) read out an abridged version of a statement by her President, issued as document A/66/395-S/2011/611, in which he confirmed his country's support for a Palestinian State. Citing the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, Spanish writer Juan Goytisolo and Palestinian-American thinker Edward Said, the statement described the injustices suffered by the Palestinian people, adding that the Middle East conflict could not be resolved unless they obtained justice. Yet the same people who had suffered one of the worst genocides in history had become the executioners of the Palestinian people. Zionists used anti-Semitism to blackmail their opponents, but anyone who denounced the Western scourge of anti-Semitism must also condemn the barbaric apartheid regime imposed on the Palestinian people, whose very right to exist was denied.

45. Reviewing the history of the Zionist movement and the partition of Palestine, he said that the Zionist State had pursued its criminal strategy against the Palestinians with the unconditional support of the United States of America. Contrary to what Israel and its ally would have the world believe, the Middle East conflict was a modern political conflict originating in Europe. Priority was always given to Israel's security, while Palestine's was ignored, as corroborated by Israel's latest act of genocide in Gaza. Moreover, the security of Palestine could not be reduced to recognition of limited self-government in West Bank and Gaza enclaves. A free, sovereign and independent Palestinian State must be created with pre-1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital, while those in the Palestinian diaspora must be allowed back to their homeland. It was incredible that Israel, which existed thanks to a General Assembly resolution, had shown so much disdain for subsequent United Nations resolutions.

46. **Mr. Saripudin** (Indonesia) said it was regrettable that each year the Special Committee had to collect information about the occupied territories in extremely difficult circumstances, because Israel continued to ignore its legitimate request for access. Moreover, Israel had ignored General Assembly resolution 65/104 and pursued its illegal expansion of West Bank and East Jerusalem settlements, while demolishing Palestinian property, confiscating land and altering the demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Indeed, only days earlier, the Israeli Government had confirmed that the building of new settlement housing would be accelerated. At the same time, it was encouraging Israelis to settle in the occupied Syrian Golan. His delegation condemned Israel's systematic violation of human rights and international humanitarian law, a direct affront to the international community.

47. In view of Israel's disregard for basic Palestinian rights, he expressed strong support for the Special Committee's recommendations. Among other things, Israel must honour its international commitments and comply with international demands. It must end its discriminatory policies and practices and prevent attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians and their property in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, while properly investigating criminal acts committed by settlers or the Israeli Defense Forces; and, in general, guaranteeing the equality of all before the law. The blockade of Gaza must end, as must the restrictions on movement that resulted from the construction of the separation wall. Israel must withdraw from the entire Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, and ensure that Palestinian refugees could return to their land.

48. It was a sensitive period for peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and Israel should take advantage of it. It would be tragic if the opportunity to resume the peace process was wasted. Indonesia supported Palestine's inalienable right to an independent State, based on the two-State solution.

49. **Mr. Mohamed** (Sudan) said that it was clear from the report of the Special Committee (A/66/370) that Israel was continuing to violate international law with its shameful blockade of the Gaza Strip, imposing severe suffering on the inhabitants: there was no freedom of movement, children were undernourished, and medical care and educational opportunities were restricted. The situation in the West Bank was no better, as Israel continued to confiscate Palestinians' land, demolish their homes, and deny them freedom of movement, health and education. In addition, Israel's continuing policy of building settlements and the separation wall was a flagrant violation of international law. Israel's ongoing colonialist behaviour had caused negotiations with the Palestinians to break down, thus adversely impacting the peace process.

50. Israel's continued occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights was also devoid of any basis in law, and its harsh treatment of the inhabitants represented further violations of international law and of human rights. The recent exchange of prisoners between Israel and Hamas was a welcome development, as was Palestine's membership of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

51. Peace in the Middle East required the establishment of an independent Palestinian State having Al-Quds Al-Sharif (Jerusalem) as its capital and the settlement of the refugee issue in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. The international community should assume its responsibilities in the matter.

52. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that after four decades and more, Israel still had not withdrawn from the occupied Arab territories, disregarding a host of United Nations resolutions and the provisions of international law. It had been able to

enjoy impunity and place itself above the law owing to the protection of certain States which, while claiming to desire the rule of international law and to support human rights, were shielding Israel from accountability for its crimes. Indeed, two States in particular were currently punishing UNESCO for having accepted Palestine as a member, in the face of an international consensus that Palestine had every right to membership not only of UNESCO but of the United Nations.

53. It was clear from the Special Committee's report that there was a systematic, continuing pattern of human rights violations by Israel. In addition, it was pursuing its feverish settlement-building activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and its policy of terrorism and repression against Syrian citizens living in the occupied Golan Heights. Those citizens faced discrimination and denial of employment because of their refusal to accept Israeli citizenship and to serve in the Israeli army.

54. Furthermore, the Israeli authorities were seeking to cut the Golan off from its geographical and cultural ties with its Syrian motherland by building a separation wall east of the village of Majdal Shams in violation of international law, including in particular Security Council resolution 497 (1981). A formal complaint about the matter had been submitted to the Secretary-General, but unfortunately no action had been taken. Syrian citizens were also being arbitrarily detained by the Israeli occupation authorities and held under inhumane conditions that did not meet even minimal United Nations standards.

55. It was high time for the United Nations, and, in particular, the Security Council, to assume its responsibilities under the Charter and compel Israel to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories. The Organization's credibility, even its every existence, was at stake.

56. **Mr. AlSaloum** (Kuwait) said that the Special Committee's report provided a clear and candid account of the continuation by Israel of practices that contravened international humanitarian law and the principles embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Those practices had caused a sharp deterioration in the human rights situation in the occupied Arab territories and had increased the suffering of Palestinians and others.

57. Kuwait supported the request of Palestine for full membership in the United Nations, as a step towards realizing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. In that regard, Palestine had achieved a historic victory by gaining admission to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

58. Kuwait called on the international community, particularly the Security Council, to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the gravest threat to security and peace in the Middle East. Israel's continued settlement construction on Palestinian territory was an obstacle to peace. Israel had persistently shown intransigence, obstruction and contempt for international law in its efforts to strengthen the occupation and change the social and demographic situation on the ground. Most recently, its Government had decided to build 2,000 new settlement units in occupied East Jerusalem in a flagrant challenge to the international community. Palestinians were subjected to growing restrictions and violations perpetrated both by armed settlers and by the occupation forces. The international community should put an end to Israel's criminal practices by upholding international law and protecting defenceless Palestinian civilians.

59. Kuwait reiterated its full and steadfast support for the struggle of the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate rights, including the right to establish a State on their territory with Jerusalem as its capital. It welcomed the recent release of a number of detainees and called for the remaining prisoners to be freed. An international fact-finding mission should be sent to verify conditions in Israeli occupation prisons and assess compliance with the principles of international law. The continuing illegal and inhumane blockade of Gaza was yet another example of Israel's violations of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Israel should withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan and from the remaining occupied Lebanese territory, and return to the borders of 4 June 1967; its continued occupation of any Arab territory was an obstacle to peace and security in the region. The international community should bring pressure to bear on Israel to end its gross violations of international law and to make a commitment to the peaceful resolution of the conflict in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003) through initiatives conducive to a just and permanent peace in the Middle East.

60. **Mr. Shaanika** (Namibia) said that Israeli practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,

including East Jerusalem, and in the other occupied Arab territories breached the Charter of the United Nations and eroded the inhabitants' fundamental rights. It was important to speak out, as long as Israel's practices presented a mortal danger to the well-being of the people of Palestine.

61. The expansion and new construction of illegal settlements and the erection of walls of annexation were an impediment to peace; the Israeli Government's continuing settlement activities defied international law, and the settlements in and around East Jerusalem were nothing but an attempt to alter the city's legal status and physical, demographic and cultural character. Such provocation must stop. As Israel was in grave breach of the principle of the inadmissibility of acquiring territory by force, the international community should compel it to end its occupation of the Palestinian Territory and its blockade of Gaza, which was a gross collective punishment of its inhabitants.

62. The only way to guarantee Israel's security, to which it was duly entitled, was through the creation of an independent Palestinian State alongside Israel, within internationally recognized borders, in fulfilment of a right far too long denied the people of Palestine. He hoped that Palestine's admission to UNESCO had sent a clear message to the Security Council as it considered Palestine's application for admission as a full Member of the United Nations.

63. **Mr. Al-Yafei** (United Arab Emirates) said that the report of the Special Committee (A/66/370) highlighted the grave and systematic human rights violations perpetrated in occupied Palestine and the occupied Syrian Golan by the Israeli authorities, which had continued to seize land, demolish Palestinian homes and expand settlements. The separation wall took up 10 per cent of the territory of the West Bank and isolated 12 per cent of Palestinians from the rest of the West Bank. Agricultural land, water resources and installations were being expropriated, particularly in Area C of the West Bank and the Jordan valley, in order to annex those areas de facto and promote Israeli investment and tourism. The growing presence of settlers in the West Bank had stoked tension and instability, but their daily acts of provocation were being ignored by the Government of Israel, which had systematically subjected Palestinians and the inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan to excessive force and arbitrary arrest.

64. The blockade imposed on Gaza since 2006 continued to restrict the entry of international aid, on which 70 per cent of Gazans depended, and of building supplies, which were sorely needed in order to rebuild the hundreds of homes, schools and health centres destroyed by Israel. The economy had been severely damaged, and poverty, chronic disease and physical and mental disorders were rife.

65. His Government fully supported the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report and deplored Israel's failure to cooperate with the Special Committee. It strongly condemned Israel's practices in the occupied Arab territories, particularly the recent decisions to intensify settlement construction in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and to freeze tax payments intended for the Palestinian Authority. Such unlawful measures had further undermined the quest for a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

66. He appealed to the international community to intervene as a matter of urgency to oblige Israel to cease all such inhumane activities and war crimes and called on Israel to comply with the resolutions of the United Nations, the Charter, and other relevant international instruments.

67. The Palestinian people had a right to establish an independent State within the borders of 4 June 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the international community had a responsibility to protect the Palestinian people and the population of the Syrian Arab Golan from aggression and occupation. He hoped that the General Assembly would strengthen the mandate of the Special Committee, and that the fact-finding machinery would be strengthened.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

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Summary record of the 22nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 8 November 2011, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Vivas Mendoza (Vice-Chair) ..... (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)
later: Mr. Ciss (Vice-Chair) ..... (Senegal)

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In the absence of Ms. Miculescu (Romania), Ms. Vivas Mendoza (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 53: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (*continued*) (A/66/356, A/66/362, A/66/364, A/66/370, A/66/373 and A/66/400)

1. **Mr. León González** (Cuba) said that there was no justification for the prolonged Israeli military occupation of Palestine, or for the continued denial of the human rights of the Palestinian people, in particular the right to self-determination and the right of refugees to return to their lands in conformity with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The international community continued to witness an alarming escalation in violence in the occupied Arab territories. Poverty rates had soared, and the population could not meet its basic human needs. While the work of the Special Committee had made the refugees' living conditions less deplorable, Israel, in flagrant violation of international law, continued to impede its endeavours.

2. Israel's illegal practices continued to aggravate the political, economic, social and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, yet the Security Council would not issue a statement in support of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. Cuba urged the Security Council to take action, in accordance with the will of the international community. It was his hope that no permanent member would exercise its obsolete, anti-democratic veto power to deny the legitimate demands of the Palestinian people. Previous efforts of the international community and the United Nations had come to naught while the Israeli authorities, with flagrant disregard for international law and blatant disrespect for the resolutions of the United Nations, had pursued a policy of aggression, in particular in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Cuba condemned the prolonged Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian Territory and was appalled by the continuing impunity it enjoyed.

3. Cuba fully supported the request of Palestine to be a full Member of the United Nations and welcomed the recent decision of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference to admit Palestine as a member. UNESCO membership was renewed confirmation that the vast majority of the international community supported the legitimate interests of the Palestinian people, and would be another forum for the Palestinian cause.

4. His delegation was alarmed at the continuing deterioration in the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, owing to Israel's excessive and indiscriminate use of force against Palestinian civilians as well as other illegal practices, including the inhuman collective punishment of Palestinians, especially the blockade of Gaza. Israel was waging an unequal war pitting a powerful army against a civilian population defending its right to exist within an independent State, thereby perpetrating a grave violation of Palestinians' human rights. The continuation of the policy of closures and the expansion of Israeli settlement construction through the seizure of vast tracts of land raised doubts as to whether Israel was serious about peace negotiations, and jeopardized the peace process.

5. His delegation reaffirmed the invalidity and illegality of the occupying Power's actions to alter the legal, physical and demographic character and the institutional structure of the occupied Syrian Golan and impose its jurisdiction and administration there. Such actions, including the expansion and construction of settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan since 1967, flouted international law, international agreements and the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations.

6. He called on Israel to adhere to Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and to completely withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the 1967 border. The continued illegal occupation of the Palestinian Territory was the main obstacle to a just and lasting peace in the region. Cuba supported the Palestinian people in its endeavour to establish an independent, sovereign State with East Jerusalem as its capital, and called for Israel's unconditional return of the Arab territories occupied in June 1967.

7. **Mr. Han** Sung Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that while the international community had taken a number of measures in an effort to resolve the Middle East question, the Israeli stance and the prejudiced Middle East policies of some countries that actively sided with Israel blocked the peace process. The occupation of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories and increasingly blatant

Israeli crimes against humanity continued. The matter needed to be resolved without delay.

8. The Sixteenth Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement had underscored the urgency of resolving the question of Palestine, without which there would be no peace in the Middle East. The first step was to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and to its violations of human rights, and then to ensure the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

9. It was the will of the international community that Palestine should be recognized as an independent State. His Government had supported the Palestinian population in its struggle for independence since 1988, and would continue to do so. It was the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State and the obligation of the international community to admit it as a Member of the United Nations. Finally, the Israeli military occupation of the Syrian Golan was a clear violation of the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic. His Government strongly urged Israel to withdraw immediately from the occupied Syrian Golan in fulfilment of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

10. **Mr. Al-Saiyani** (Yemen) said that the report of the Special Committee (A/66/370) gave a clear account of the inhumane practices pursued by Israel against the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories, which contravened international humanitarian law and the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and had led to a deterioration in both the human rights and the social and economic situation of those peoples.

11. For more than four decades, Israel had violated the rights of the Palestinian people and paid no heed to the rules of international law, the Geneva Conventions or the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. It continued to build the separation wall and to expand settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, impervious to the United Nations resolutions that stressed that such actions were in clear violation of the Geneva Conventions.

12. Israel was continuing its aggressive policies towards the Palestinian people. Those policies included assassination, hunger, oppression, land expropriation, border closures and turning Gaza into an immense prison, where the inmates were denied access to the most basic necessities. The human rights situation in Gaza had deteriorated even further since the most recent Israeli attack and the subsequent blockade, with children being particularly vulnerable to the consequent malnutrition and denial of proper health care.

13. The situation in the West Bank was no better. Israel continued to expropriate land, destroy homes, displace families and pursue other inhumane policies.

14. His delegation called upon the international community and the Security Council to shoulder their responsibility to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli problem, and renewed its support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and its aspiration to establish its own independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. His delegation also condemned Israeli efforts to annex the Syrian Golan by expanding existing and establishing new settlements, exploiting natural resources and other illegitimate practices.

15. Settlement activity must be halted and Israel must withdraw from all occupied Arab territory, including the Syrian Golan, and the recommendations of the Special Committee must be implemented. The international community must bring pressure to bear on Israel to halt its flagrant violations of international law, respect United Nations resolutions and make a commitment to peace.

16. **Mr. Tarawneh** (Jordan) said that his delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Committee, which should continue its work until Israel ended its occupation of Arab territory. The report highlighted Israeli practices that constituted violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. Israel should cooperate with the Special Committee and comply with its recommendations.

17. His delegation called on Israel to cease all practices that violated international law, including violent incursions, forced displacement, restrictions on movement of people and goods, the confiscation of property, arbitrary arrests of Palestinians, and excavations around and under Muslim and Christian holy sites. Such actions obstructed the peace process. Israel must comply with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and lift its blockade of Gaza. His delegation called on Israel to comply with the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War in the Occupied

Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories.

18. The two-State solution was the only way to achieve comprehensive, lasting peace, and was the first step in addressing broader problems in the Middle East. His Government condemned Israel's recent approval of new settlement construction, in clear violation of international law and United Nations resolutions, as an affront to the peace process supported by the international community.

19. **Mr. Elhadji Issa** (Niger) said that a number of United Nations resolutions had been adopted in the search for a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine in conformity with international law. Niger had endorsed the path of peace towards a solution and had, through the United Nations and the African Union, upheld the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination within the 1967 borders, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

20. It was indefensible that, despite forty years of commendable efforts by the international community to lead the parties to a peaceful solution, the people of Palestine were stateless and living in deplorable conditions. The two parties must overcome their differences and work towards peace so as to end the suffering. A lasting solution was a matter of urgency. His Government, together with the majority of the international community, supported the creation of an independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, alongside the State of Israel.

21. **Mr. Andrabi** (Pakistan) said that his Government endorsed the work of the Special Committee and called for the full implementation of the recommendations contained in its report, which detailed the continuing violations of the rights of the Palestinian people and the alarming impunity enjoyed by the occupying Power. Ending the culture of impunity was crucial to building the trust that was essential to meaningful Arab-Israeli negotiations. The report also described Israeli practices that changed the demographics of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including demolition of Palestinian homes, forced evictions, and revocation of residency rights. Ongoing settlement construction, a clear provocation, violated international law. Evidence of Palestinian heritage was being destroyed through changes in the status of cemeteries, mosques, and churches. His Government joined the international community in calling upon Israel to cease all settlement activity and to lift its blockade of Gaza, in compliance with its international obligations.

22. The request by Palestine for membership in the United Nations was an expression of its inalienable right to self-determination and had his Government's support. Only a strong State of Palestine as a responsible member of the international community could guarantee regional peace. Lasting peace in the region also required progress to be made on Israel's conflicts with the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon. Living conditions in the occupied Syrian Golan had been adversely affected by the inequitable distribution of water resources, discrimination against workers and high tax rates, which were in direct contravention of Security Council resolution 497 (1981). Israel must withdraw completely from Lebanese territory and the occupied Syrian Golan in accordance with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Pakistan remained committed to peace for all inhabitants of the region.

23. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Palestinian people had lived under the oppressive Israeli military occupation for decades, deprived of their basic human rights. Shocking human rights violations persisted alongside the theft of land, resources and culture that were part and parcel of ongoing settlement activities. The prolonged conflict and resulting suffering were the direct result of Israel's continued defiance of the international community and its flagrant disregard for international law, United Nations resolutions, and the fundamental human rights of the Palestinian people. The United Nations and the international community must uphold their political, moral and legal responsibility to end all of Israel's military occupations as well as its violations of the rights of the Palestinian people.

24. The illegal Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip had steadily tightened since June 2007, with disastrous humanitarian and economic consequences. The savage blockade constituted a crime against humanity and posed a serious threat to international peace and security, and to regional stability. It was a form of collective punishment in violation of article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israel was stepping up settlement activities in its attempt to further colonize the Occupied Palestinian Territory and change its demographic composition. Such activities were in

breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and its Additional Protocol I, United Nations resolutions and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

25. The Middle East conflict had at its core the tragedy of Palestine. His Government joined the international community in supporting a fair, just policy for Palestine based on the right of its people to defy the illegitimate occupying Power and achieve self-determination. Israeli crimes against Palestinians and other peoples in the region currently posed the most serious threat to regional and international peace and security. Lasting peace would not be achieved through blind support of the Israeli regime and its policy of State terrorism, but, rather, through the establishment of a peaceful, democratic process through which Palestinians could decide their own future. Clearly the United Nations was in a position to effectively further such a solution.

26. The occupied Syrian Golan was an integral part of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, and his Government was deeply concerned about the deterioration of the human rights situation and the increase in illegal Jewish settlements. He condemned all measures taken to undermine the territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic.

27. **Mr. Mahmood** (Bangladesh) said that his delegation commended the efforts of the members of the Special Committee who, despite Israel's persistent refusal to cooperate, had been able to visit Gaza and gain first-hand experience that was reflected in the report. For decades the Palestinian people had suffered collective punishment and violations of their human rights, including the right to self-determination. It was particularly shocking that small children and the elderly were not spared Israeli atrocities.

28. The Israeli blockade had aggravated the situation: an alarming 70 per cent of the Palestinian population in Gaza depended on humanitarian aid, while 90 per cent of factories in Gaza had closed and 38 per cent of its families were grappling with food insecurity. The blockade violated human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in international humanitarian law and, in particular, in the Fourth Geneva Convention. Recent reports confirming Israel's intention to expand settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank were also of grave concern.

29. His delegation urged Israel to cease settlement activity and to lift its embargo and allow free movement of goods, persons and humanitarian aid throughout the occupied territories. It was imperative to end the collective punishment of the people of Gaza, to stop the construction of the separation wall and to comply with General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, as well as with the Fourth Geneva Convention. Trust must be built to achieve a peaceful resolution to the conflict through the two-State solution.

30. **Mr. Benmehidi** (Algeria) said that the work of the Special Committee confirmed that Israel continued its widescale violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the occupied territories; the occupying Power blatantly disregarded the fundamental rights to life, freedom of movement and speech, and to medical care. The absolute impunity of Israel as it confiscated land, demolished homes, extended illegal settlements and restricted the movement of Palestinians was alarming.

31. The situation in the Gaza Strip was very serious. The inhabitants of the overpopulated and largely poor territory were enduring the consequences of the Israeli blockade, which limited humanitarian access, restricted desperately needed imports, prohibited exports and prevented young Palestinians from visiting their families or attending universities outside Gaza. Even more serious was the situation of Palestinian prisoners and detainees. He welcomed the recent prisoner exchange, but noted that more than 5,000 people remained imprisoned and were largely subjected to poor treatment and torture. The international community could no longer ignore the flagrant disregard for international law and must act swiftly to free the prisoners who were illegally detained.

32. In the Syrian Golan, illegally annexed in an unprecedented act, the living conditions of the Syrian inhabitants were deteriorating daily owing to arbitrary arrests and detentions and unacceptable challenges to their Arab identity. Such practices confirmed the doubts of his delegation that Israel's true intention was to redraw the map in the occupied territories by systematically annexing land and doing away with any Palestinian presence. They also revealed the intransigence of Israel, as it refused all attempts to resolve the crisis through international efforts to resume negotiations. There could be no settlement of the conflict until Israel ended its occupation, withdrew

its forces from all the occupied Arab territories, dismantled existing settlements, suspended the construction of the separation wall and abandoned all policies that compromised the success of the peace process.

33. His delegation regretted that international and regional initiatives had not resulted in the renewal of direct negotiations owing to Israel's intransigence and impunity. That impunity undermined the Organization's credibility, allowed the occupying Power to continue its human rights violations, and frustrated the oppressed population. The Security Council must exercise its prerogatives with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security and end Israel's impunity. The request of the State of Palestine to be admitted as a Member of the United Nations was an opportunity for the Security Council to correct a long-standing injustice, in an unequivocal confirmation by the international community that it would uphold international law.

34. **Mr. Kafeero** (Uganda) said that his delegation regretted that despite international and regional efforts the peace process was deadlocked, leading to more violence. Rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel and Israeli air strikes on Gaza were of concern. While the support of the international community was crucial, Israel and Palestine bore primary responsibility for achieving comprehensive, lasting peace and he called on both parties to resume negotiations and take bold decisions.

35. Uganda supported the two-State solution on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab peace initiative and the road map. All parties must adhere to their obligations under the road map. It was crucial to resume regional negotiations and he welcomed the recent prisoner exchange agreement, which could foster greater cooperation. Yet his Government was deeply concerned that new Israeli settlement units had been approved, and called for an immediate freeze on all settlement activity. The humanitarian situation in Gaza was another concern, and he called on Israel to lift its blockade of Gaza and on all parties to adhere to Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

36. His delegation commended the humanitarian work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), but noted that it continued to face funding shortfalls. He called on the international community to provide further support to UNRWA. Finally, he urged Israel and Palestine to take practical steps toward direct negotiations and affirmed that the international community had a crucial support role in the process of achieving lasting peace.

37. **Mr. Mansour** (Lebanon) said that after decades of efforts by the international community to broker a just and comprehensive settlement of the conflict in the Middle East, Israel still would not negotiate on final status issues. Faced with the occupying Power's refusal to freeze settlements, to return to the 1967 borders, to negotiate over the status of Jerusalem, and to offer the right of return to Palestinian refugees, the State of Palestine had decided to continue its legitimate struggle to exercise its inalienable right to self-determination by seeking membership in the United Nations. Its application should be considered on its merits alone and in accordance with Article 4 of the Charter, in compliance with the 1948 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Admission to the United Nations should not depend on the outcome of negotiations on Palestine as that would grant Israel the right to veto the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

38. The Quartet had reiterated the obligations of both parties and had called on them to refrain from provocations, yet Israel had approved plans to build thousands of settlement units on land illegally annexed from Palestinian villages. The occupying Power had demolished Palestinian residences and farms, uprooted hundreds of olive and almond trees, and physically assaulted Palestinian civilians, as documented by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Settlement activity, including the separation wall, undermined the two-State solution in a bid by Israel to confiscate Palestinian land and alter the identity and status of East Jerusalem. It was clear that Israel was choosing settlements and the illegal blockade of Gaza over peace. Israel did not honour Palestinians' right to life; its alleged easing of the blockade had done little to mitigate its effects and did not absolve the occupying Power of its responsibilities. No peace could be envisaged as long as Israel continued to impose collective punishment on the people of Palestine.

39. Israeli practices remained a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, including mechanisms for the protection of civilians enshrined in the Fourth Geneva Convention and the 1907 Hague Rules of War

and Occupation. A lasting peace must include the Syrian Arab Republic, and Israel must comply with Security Council resolution 497 (1981); Israel must also withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Any attempt by Israel to alter the legal, material and demographic status of the Golan was a violation of international law. The wall built to separate people in the occupied Syrian Golan from their family members outside the Occupied Territory was further evidence of the cruelty of Israel's practices. Lebanon condemned Israeli restrictions on access to water in the occupied Golan, the denial of family visits to the Syrian Arab Republic and the brutal practices in prisons in the occupied Syrian Golan.

40. Palestine had extended its hand to Israel in an effort to build peace, yet Israel's response had been to increase settlement activity and freeze the transfer of Palestinian tax revenues in apparent punishment for its UNESCO membership. It was the duty of the international community to end the occupation of the State of Palestine and to protect its people from human rights violations.

41. *Mr. Ciss (Senegal), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

42. **Mr. Govender** (South Africa) said that over the years the Special Committee had carried out its tasks diligently, even when the Israeli authorities had refused to cooperate, yet only strict adherence by the occupying Power to international human rights and humanitarian law and to its obligations under human rights treaties and conventions would change the human rights situation of the Palestinian people. Israeli practices and policies impinged upon the human rights and well-being of the Palestinian people and the people of the occupied Syrian Golan. The occupying Power asserted that millions throughout the Arab world were calling for basic human rights; the international community had seen that those calls were not going unheeded. Yet the Palestinian people's quest for recognition of their human rights was more compelling, not least since they were calling for recognition of their rights by those who claimed to be the only free society in the Middle East.

43. The occupying Power's obligation to safeguard human rights was clearly contained in the international conventions that it had ratified. Indeed, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory* affirmed that international human rights conventions were applicable to Israeli acts in the occupied territories. Yet attempts by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967 and by the Special Committee to carry out their mandates had met with resistance by the Israeli Government. Member States had the responsibility to assist United Nations-mandated entities to fully carry out their tasks, including by requiring the implementation of recommendation 63, on compliance by Israel with United Nations resolutions, contained in the report of the Special Committee (A/66/370).

44. The Palestinian people endured crippling sanctions owing to the ongoing illegal blockade of Gaza. All international law experts had noted that the blockade adversely affected the provision of humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. While the Charter provided for the right to self-defence, in the exercise of that right Israel was forcing civilian populations in Palestine and the Syrian Golan to pay a disproportionate price for actions for which they were not responsible. Bedouin communities in the West Bank had been victimized for decades, their traditional pastoral way of life under constant threat owing to Israeli settlement activity. The settlement policies contravened the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibited the transfer of civilian populations into occupied territories, and subjected Palestinians to the double jeopardy of forced removals and settler violence.

45. The Israeli Government was required to protect civilian populations living under its occupation, yet ongoing physical attacks on civilians and vandalism of their villages and agricultural lands, perpetrated by Israeli settlers, captured on video and posted to social networking sites, went unpunished by Israeli defence and police forces. Israel should comply with the Special Rapporteur's recommendations for the adoption of guidelines, as proposed by the non-governmental organization B'Tselem, on the protection of Palestinian children living under occupation as a minimum basis for compliance with international humanitarian law, and for the importation into Gaza of materials needed to repair water and electricity infrastructure. Israel should lift the blockade of Gaza, and, again heeding the advice of the Special Rapporteur, a request should be made to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion

on the legal status of prolonged occupation, as aggravated by the transfer of large numbers of persons from the occupying Power and the imposition of a dual and discriminatory administrative and legal system in the West Bank, including Jerusalem. A permanent solution to the conflict was the ideal, but in the meantime he urged the Israeli authorities to fully cooperate with all United Nations entities in carrying out their mandated tasks.

46. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his Government was working to fulfil the rightful demands of the people of the Syrian Arab Republic for democratic reform, but would not permit those demands to be co-opted to allow acts of terrorism. Statements by the representative of Israel alleging human rights violations in the Syrian Arab Republic were failed attempts to divert international public opinion away from Israeli crimes in the occupied Arab territories. The representative of Israel would not be allowed to interfere in the internal affairs of his country, or to detract from the discussion of Israeli practices affecting the human rights of Arabs in the occupied territories.

47. It was surprising that the representative of Israel spoke of his Government's commitment to human rights when Israel continuously violated human rights in the occupied territories and had for decades prevented human rights activists and United Nations personnel, and even the Special Committee, from carrying out their mandated talks. If, as Israel claimed, the work of the Special Committee were politicized, then the same must be true of all the statements — not only the condemnation of Israeli practices — that had been made by Members States at the current session and over the years, including those by Israel's friends. Israel's only recourse was to accuse the United Nations of political bias. More than 1,000 resolutions condemning Israeli occupation and violations of human rights had been adopted — a record number of resolutions to have one State comply with international law. Yet Israel, in flagrant defiance of the United Nations and the international community, had not implemented any.

48. The representative of Israel refused to acknowledge documented human rights violations, the unprecedented, atrocious crimes against the innocent, amounting to ethnic cleansing, perpetrated by Israel. He wondered whether the representative of Israel had read the reports introduced by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, all documenting Israel's violations of human rights in the occupied Arab territories. It was, perhaps, not so strange after all that Israel denied reality as daily it pursued its violent policies against the peoples of the region. It was crucial to understand the Israeli concept of democracy and human rights, which included occupying others' lands, building settlements, illegally detaining Palestinians, launching wars against the States of the region, imposing an inhuman blockade on Gaza, carrying out assassinations, and desecrating Christian and Muslim holy sites in the Occupied Territory.

49. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Israel was employing a well-worn strategy by inventing baseless allegations to turn the attention of the international community away from its abhorrent criminal policies in the Middle East. There were no human rights principles that were not systematically violated by the Israeli regime. United Nations resolutions and reports had attested to the fact that Israel did not respect the basic values and human rights held dear in the civilized world. It was high time that the international community countered the Israeli regime's inhuman practices afflicting the defenceless Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories.

50. **Mr. Keidar** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, reiterated that the United Nations had for decades invested resources in the Special Committee to produce biased reports against Israel, the only free society in the Middle East, while the people of the region suffered the pain and humiliation of repression, economic stagnation and tyranny. In an effort to contextualize the statements by the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran, people were being slaughtered in the streets of Syria and the Human Rights Committee had recently noted that approximately 3,500 people had been killed there since March. Women were being stoned to death in Iran and millions were demanding their basic rights throughout the Arab world.

51. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was clear that the occupying Power was not in an enviable position in respect of its human rights record. The representative of Israel was attempting to misrepresent the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to divert international attention away from the terrorist and racist policies of

Israel, and to present his country as the only democratic country in the region. Yet evidence had accumulated attesting to Israel's Zionist approach, unmatched in its brutality, to the Arab peoples of the occupied territories. There was not enough time to enumerate all of the atrocities committed by Israel, but if all of its crimes against humanity were compiled in one document, it would be the bulkiest document in the world.

52. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, noted that instead of answering to world public opinion in respect of its unparalleled record of non-compliance with humanitarian and human rights principles and its long catalogue of atrocities and crimes against humanity, Israeli officials consistently made inflammatory and baseless allegations against other countries. The blatant support that some Powers granted the Israeli regime was one of the world's bitterest realities. By blocking every action against the inhuman policies of the Israeli regime, its supporters had given it a blank cheque to violate the internationally recognized rights of the Palestinian people and other peoples of the region with impunity. It was crucial to put an end to such acts. The United Nations should uphold its responsibilities, support Palestine and relieve the Palestinian people of its protracted suffering under occupation.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.

United Nations A/C.4/66/SR.23

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Summary record of the 23rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 10 November 2011, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Miculescu ..... (Romania)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

1. **The Chair** drew attention to the draft resolutions before the Committee, some of which had not been issued a full 24 hours before they were to be considered. She would take it that the Committee was willing to waive the 24-hour rule under rule 120 of the rules of procedure and to take action on the draft resolutions.

2. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 50: Effects of atomic radiation (*continued*) (A/C.4/66/L.7)

Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.7: Effects of atomic radiation

3. **The Chair** announced that Austria, Ireland, Latvia, Monaco and Portugal had become sponsors of the draft resolution.

4. **Mr. Silberberg** (Germany), introducing draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.7, said that agreement had been reached in informal consultations on a solution to the issue of membership by six additional countries, pursuant to the invitation by the General Assembly in its resolution 61/109, of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation. If the draft resolution was adopted, the six countries, currently observers, would be invited to become full members of the Scientific Committee. Agreement had also been reached on a review mechanism for a possible further expansion of the membership of the Scientific Committee, taking into account, inter alia, the principle of equitable geographical distribution, as well as the need to ensure the effectiveness and quality of the work of the Scientific Committee.

5. **Ms. Herity** (Secretary of the Committee) said that, with respect to paragraph 16 of the draft resolution, the additional resource requirement under section 14, Environment, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013 was estimated at $87,600. The Secretary-General, following a review of the resources proposed under section 14, would make every effort to absorb the additional cost of $87,600. Should draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.7 be adopted, the Secretary-General would not be seeking additional resources under section 14 for the biennium 2012-2013.

6. *Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.7 was adopted.*

7. **Mr. Viinanen** (Finland) said that his delegation welcomed the adoption of the draft resolution, which would resolve the matter of membership and enable the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation to concentrate on substantive subjects such as the consequences of the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station in Japan. Finland was pleased to become a full member of the Scientific Committee and had appointed 20 additional experts to contribute to its work.

8. **Mr. Toba** (Brazil) welcomed the increase in membership of the Scientific Committee and pointed out that Brazilian scientist Carlos Chagas Filho had served as Vice-Chairman of the Scientific Committee at its first session. His Government supported the Scientific Committee's mandate as set forth in General Assembly resolution 913 (X). He noted with satisfaction that the draft resolution recognized the importance of disseminating the results of the work of the Scientific Committee and of widely publicizing scientific knowledge of atomic radiation. The studies conducted by the Scientific Committee were of the utmost importance, as they influenced decisions taken in the fields of energy, waste management, protection of public workers and the environment.

9. **Mr. Lazarev** (Belarus) said that his delegation welcomed the adoption of the draft resolution. The decision to add new States, including Belarus, to the membership of the Scientific Committee would enhance the effectiveness of its work.

10. As a new member, his country would draw on its quarter century of unique experience in dealing with the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear accident, including through the harnessing of its network of research centres. As part of that research, particular attention had been devoted to the fields of radioecology and medicine, as well as to the pursuit of peaceful nuclear technology and the scientifically sound construction of nuclear power stations.

11. **Mr. Sanabria** (Spain) welcomed the adoption of the draft resolution and stressed the need for an appropriate mechanism and clear criteria for possible future expansion of membership of the Scientific Committee.

12. **Mr. Andrabi** (Pakistan) welcomed the adoption of the draft resolution. Pakistan looked forward to contributing to the work of the Scientific Committee as a full member.

13. **Mr. Rim** Kap-soo (Republic of Korea) said that the Republic of Korea was pleased and honoured to join the Scientific Committee as a full member and reaffirmed the willingness of his Government to make a positive contribution to its work.

14. **Mr. Listov** (Russian Federation) welcomed the adoption of the draft resolution; the addition of new members to the Scientific Committee would enhance the quality of its work. Belarus and Ukraine, in particular, had ample experience of dealing with the consequences of the contamination caused by the Chernobyl disaster and had great expertise in that area.

Agenda item 52: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (*continued*) (A/C.4/66/L.9-L.12)

Agenda item 53: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (*continued*) (A/C.4/66/L.13-L.17)

15. **The Chair** invited the Committee to consider the draft resolutions submitted under agenda items 52 and 53, noting that they had no programme budget implications.

16. **Mr. Khan** (Indonesia), introducing the four draft resolutions under agenda item 52 (A/C.4/66/L.9-L.12), said that the texts reflected the strong support of the international community for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and for its mandate. He expressed the hope that they would receive overwhelming support in the Committee.

17. **Mr. León González** (Cuba), introducing the five draft resolutions under agenda item 53 (A/C.4/66/L.13-L.17), said that the human rights situation of the civilian populations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan remained critical as a result of Israel's violations of human rights and international law. The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, still required the attention of the international community, especially in view of Israel's illegal settlement campaign. Tensions had increased, jeopardizing the possibility of achieving a two-State solution based on pre-1967 borders. The Gaza Strip was also a matter of concern. He called on the members of the Committee to support the draft resolutions.

18. **Mr. Lagergren** (Observer for the European Union), recalling the European Union's statements in explanation of vote of the previous year on some of the resolutions on items related to Palestine, acknowledged the efforts of the Palestine delegation to streamline the texts and reduce the number of resolutions, and encouraged further steps in that regard. The European Union fully supported a two-State solution and deeply appreciated the invaluable work of UNRWA.

19. **Ms. Ventura** (Canada) said that her Government supported a two-State solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, a solution which should be reached through a negotiated settlement between the parties that would guarantee Israel's right to live in peace and security with its neighbours and lead to the creation of a viable and independent Palestinian State. The Quartet statement of 23 September 2011 provided a good basis on which to move forward.

20. On the issue of both parties having a positive role to play in a lasting peace, Canada had long been concerned by the sheer number of United Nations resolutions critical solely of Israel. No other conflict in the world had absorbed so much time and energy on the part of Member States, even though there were many other longstanding conflicts. The draft resolutions before the Committee did not address the complexities of the issues or the actions and responsibilities of all parties concerned. As a package, they were one-sided and unbalanced, made no reference to terrorist activities carried out by Hamas and others against Israel, and were thus ultimately unhelpful to the cause of a lasting negotiated peace. There were important elements in the draft resolutions that needed to be discussed, but they were drowned out by their unbalanced nature.

21. As a result, Canada had made a decision based on its principled foreign policy to vote no or to abstain on the package of General Assembly resolutions on the Middle East. The problem was with the process. Canada's long-standing position had not changed: Israel was bound by the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and must comply with its provisions. Canada would continue to support efforts for a negotiated solution and would do what it could to help the parties achieve that solution. However, until there was a more balanced approach, Canada would express its discontent with the process through its votes.

Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.9: Assistance to Palestine refugees

22. **The Chair** announced that Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Netherlands, Portugal and Ukraine had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

23. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel.

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Canada, Haiti, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America, Vanuatu.

24. *Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.9 was adopted by 160 votes to 1, with 9 abstentions.**

Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.10: Persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities

25. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint

* The delegations of Comoros, Niger and Nigeria subsequently informed the Committee that they had intended to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Haiti, Panama, Vanuatu.

26. *Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.10 was adopted by 162 votes to 7, with 4 abstentions.*

Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.11: Operations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

27. **The Chair** announced that Nigeria had become a sponsor of the draft resolution.

28. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Vanuatu.

29. *Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.11 was adopted by 163 votes to 7, with 2 abstentions.*

Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.12: Palestine refugees' properties and their revenues

30. **The Chair** announced that Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Iceland, Nigeria, Portugal, Switzerland and Ukraine had become sponsors of the draft resolution.

31. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize,

Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Haiti, Vanuatu.

32. *Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.12 was adopted by 163 votes to 7, with 3 abstentions.*

Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.13: Work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

33. **The Chair** announced that Mali and Nigeria had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

34. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Panama, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Bahamas, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Netherlands, New

Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Vanuatu. .

35. *Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.13 was adopted by 89 votes to 9, with 72 abstentions.*

Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.14: Applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories

36. **The Chair** announced that Mali had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

37. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Vanuatu.

38. *Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.14 was adopted by 162 votes to 7, with 3 abstentions.*

Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.15: Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan

39. **The Chair** announced that Mali had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

40. **Mr. Aquino** (Peru), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, said that Peru would vote in favour of draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.15. In keeping with its consistent position, Peru was in favour of a two-State solution that would guarantee for both parties the right to live in peace within secure boundaries and free from threats or acts of force. Peru held the view that the Israeli settlements were illegal, and joined the international call for the peace process to be resumed immediately, based on full compliance by all parties with the commitments undertaken in previous agreements, especially the Quarter road map, and with international law, including the resolutions adopted in the framework of the United Nations.

41. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Panama, Vanuatu.

42. *Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.15 was adopted by 160 votes to 7, with 5 abstentions.*

Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.16: Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

43. **The Chair** announced that Mali had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

44. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-

Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Panama, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Vanuatu.

45. *Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.16 was adopted by 158 votes to 9, with 4 abstentions.*

Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.17: The occupied Syrian Golan

46. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel.

Abstaining:

Cameroon, Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Tonga, United States of America, Vanuatu.

47. *Draft resolution A/C.4/66/L.17 was adopted by 159 votes to 1, with 11 abstentions.*

48. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation had voted in favour of draft resolutions A/C.4/66/L.13, L.14 and L.16 to show its solidarity with the Palestinian people and stress the importance of international recognition of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to defend themselves from foreign occupation and aggression. Owing to lack of attention to the root causes of the Palestinian crisis, it had remained unresolved for more than six decades, and the illegal occupation of Palestinian and other Arab territories by the Israeli regime had continued, as had the persistent violations of the rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to self-determination and the right of the Palestine refugees to return to their homeland.

49. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for Palestine) thanked all the delegations that had voted in favour of the draft resolutions under agenda items 52 and 53. The reaffirmation of the human rights of the Palestinian people, including the Palestine refugees, and the core principles and just positions expressed in the resolutions were of the utmost importance to Palestine.

50. She deeply regretted the unjustified abstentions and negative votes by a Member State that had

historically been a strong supporter of UNRWA and of the rights of the refugees, and had played an important role as a facilitator of the multilateral refugee working group in the context of the Middle East peace process. She wondered what had changed in regard to the plight of the Palestine refugees and the role of the Agency to cause that negative shift. The international community should be unwavering in its resolve to find a just solution to the question of Palestine in all its aspects, including to the problem of Palestine refugees, on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

51. Palestine was, however, grateful for the international community's commitment to UNRWA, and, in particular, for the significant support of host nations and the donor community. The resolve and will of Member States had aided Palestine in seeking a two-State solution despite the constant erosion of its viability owing to Israel's violations, particularly its illegal settlement campaign throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The international community must continue to firmly demand the complete cessation of the illegal Israeli campaign and to demand unequivocally, as it had in the draft resolutions, that Israel, the occupying Power, should respect the rights of the Palestinian people under its occupation and of the Syrian people in the occupied Syrian Golan and that it should abide fully by its obligations under international law, including under the Fourth Geneva Convention and the human rights covenants.

52. Palestine's appeal for support was all the more pressing in view of the instability and uncertainty that was putting the two-State solution in serious jeopardy and destabilizing the situation on the ground. The Palestinian leadership had embarked on a peaceful political initiative based on the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and their historic and legitimate right to join the community of nations. Those who truly supported the cause of peace must remain consistent in their demand for full compliance by Israel, the occupying Power, with all its obligations under international law, for only respect for the law would change the situation on the ground and permit the resumption and advancement of serious negotiations on all core issues, finally bringing peace, security and coexistence for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and for the Middle East as a whole.

53. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the support for the draft resolutions adopted under agenda items 52 and 53 reflected the international community's rejection of occupation by force and of human rights violations. The draft resolutions sent a clear message to Israel to end its occupation of all the occupied Arab territories and to cease its violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. In particular, the adoption by an overwhelming majority of Member States of the resolution on the occupied Syrian Golan (A/C.4/66/L.17) confirmed that Israel's attempts to annex the occupied Syrian Golan and to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration, and to build and expand settlements and to pursue racist practices against the Syrian people of the Golan, in a twofold violation of international law, were null and void and without international legal effect. Those measures recalled the darkest days of modern history when, at the beginning of the Second World War in Europe, a particular State had attacked and annexed parts of other countries.

54. The adoption of the draft resolutions underscored the importance of the work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, and he called on all States to assist the Special Committee in bringing Israel's crimes to light. Any attempt to undermine the Special Committee would only provide Israel with the cover it needed to pursue its practices and settlement activities in violation of human rights and international law.

55. The Syrian Arab Republic had frequently expressed its commitment to a fair and just peace, but the Israeli response to its initiatives and overtures had been to prevaricate and continue with its well-known practices in the occupied Arab territories, including the continued detention of thousands of Palestinians, 33 of them elected members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, and the maintenance of the blockade of Gaza. Likewise, settlement activities continued a pace in the West Bank, especially East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, notwithstanding international condemnation. A peace process had no chance of success if one side was working to promote it with the full support of the international community, while the other side, Israel, was doing its utmost to undermine it. What the peace process needed was an Israeli partner that was really committed to a peace based on internationally recognized principles, particularly Israel's withdrawal from occupied Arab territories to the boundaries of 4 June 1967. It was regrettable that

although everyone was now aware of that reality, some continued to make excuses for Israel's undermining of peace.

56. The Israeli delegation had been the only one to vote against the draft resolution on the occupied Syrian Golan and all the other draft resolutions just adopted. In so doing, it had unequivocally departed from international consensus and defied the United Nations, and international law. He called on those few delegations that had abstained from voting on the draft resolution on the occupied Syrian Golan to join the international consensus and vote in favour when it went before the plenary Assembly. Any failure to condemn the Israeli occupation and annexation would only send the wrong message to those who broke the law, suggesting that the law of the jungle had now taken the place of international law and that law-breakers enjoyed impunity. He invited delegations that had voted against any of the draft resolutions to put themselves in the position of the Arab civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan for just one day in order to understand their terrible suffering at the hands of barbaric settlers whose actions would eliminate any hope of a just and comprehensive peace.

57. **Mr. Keidar** (Israel) said that the draft resolutions which the Committee had just adopted were too long, too one-sided and too focused on Israel when there were so many other pressing global issues on the agenda of the United Nations. The adoption of the draft resolutions would not be of much assistance to the resumption of the peace process. He joined the Observer for Palestine in stating that the goal was to resume the peace process and the negotiations; that was Israel's goal as well.

Agenda item 121: Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (A/C.4/66/L.8)

Draft decision A/C.4/66/L.8: Proposed programme of work and timetable of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) for the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly

58. *Draft decision A/C.4/66/L.8 was adopted.*

Completion of the Committee's work

59. **The Chair** said that the work of the Fourth Committee was mainly political and, as agreed by the members of the Committee, that character should be retained and strengthened. At the same time, the Committee also covered other important issues that related to many other aspects of the work of the Secretariat, such as public information, outer space and atomic radiation. The agenda items allocated to the Committee provided opportunities for delegations to consider those issues in an in-depth manner and to benefit from the flexible working methods adopted by the Committee in recent years. The format of interactive dialogue had proven to be very useful and informative.

60. After reviewing the work accomplished under each agenda item during the session, she declared that the Committee had completed its work at the main part of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.